

WHITFIELD PARISH

St James' Church † St Luke's Church

LIFE Group Notes w/b Sunday 18 May 2008

The Good Life – Love your enemies

Matthew 5.43 – 48

We are now at the end of Chapter 5 of Matthew's Gospel, a chapter that is dominated by the opening words, which we know as the beatitudes (from Latin 'beatus', meaning 'blessed').

1. Scanning the chapter, how has God blessed you by studying this chapter and what have you learned about Jesus' approach to God and his law (the Ten Commandments principally)?
2. Do you feel any of this teaching has had an affect on the way you live your own life and your attitude towards others? Try to be open and share your response.

Read Matthew 5 v.43-48

3. This passage opens with the words: *You have heard that it was said, "Love your neighbour and hate your enemy."* In what ways do you think this is (or is not) Bible teaching? Consider **Leviticus 19 v.18**, which is the origin of the quotation.
(Matthew also quotes this Old Testament 'law' in 19 v.19 and 22 v.39.)
4. **Matthew 5 v.44** uses the word 'enemy', a word that we define pretty narrowly today. How can we define enemy

so that this verse has a broader application in our lives, as Jesus no doubt meant it to have?

5. **The Golden Rule** – do unto others as you would have them do unto you (**Luke 6 v.31**) – isn't the dominant ethic of our society. How could that Golden Rule be rephrased to reflect how most people in our culture really treat others? (Try to come up with at least one each from your own experience.)
6. Jesus encourages us to be counter-cultural. In what ways did Jesus show mercy to those around him whether they deserved it or not? (There are lots!)
7. The apostle Paul encourages us to live out this counter-cultural life in the power of the Holy Spirit (**Romans 12 v.1-2**). In what way do you think God the Holy Spirit would like to help you to be merciful to others?

This final section should **not** be seen as optional.

8. Spend time asking God the Holy Spirit to fill you with his spirit and then pray for those who come to your mind; pray particularly for those you experience difficulty with. (Mull over the promise of **Matthew 5 v.44-48** to encourage and inspire you.)
9. In your group, pray for the healing of each other and also the healing of those who you realise are your neighbours and to whom you personally need to extend God's mercy and love.... **and be blessed!**
10. Write down something you want God the Holy Spirit to help you with this week, believing God will hear your prayer and answer it.