

ST. BARNABAS CHURCH, SWANLAND
SMALL GROUPS NOTES

Sharing Christ through friendship

3rd Sunday before Advent/ Remembrance Sunday – w/beg 13 November 2011

Micah 4:1-5; Matthew 5:43-48 Love for enemies/ Remembrance Sunday

Welcome/ icebreaker	Can you think of someone who is now close to you who you used to think of as an ‘opponent’? What happened to change your relationship?
Worship	40 Be still for the presence of the Lord; 125 Give thanks with a grateful heart; 381 Make me a channel of your peace; 664 Beauty for brokenness; 953 O God beyond all praising (<i>to the ‘Jupiter’ tune</i>).
Word (refs.↓)	
Matthew 5:43	Jesus says “you have heard that it was said...” – but the words he quotes in v.43 come from the tradition of the time, not the Bible. How had the religious community of Jesus’ day misinterpreted the command to ‘love your neighbour’? What warning does that send to our fellowship today?
Matthew 5:44 (NIV footnote)/ Luke 6:27-28	“bless... do good.. pray...” - Jesus spells out 3 ways to love our enemies in practice. In what ways can you apply this in your personal life? Is there a danger that blessing and doing good to those who oppose us will only reinforce what they are doing? How can we avoid our words and actions having this effect?
Matthew 5:43-48	Jesus taught us to love our enemies – but he was also highly critical of his own enemies (especially the Pharisees and teachers of the law): does that mean he didn’t love them himself? If he did, how does this help us to understand what it means to love those who oppose us?
<i>(optional question – wider study on war/peace)</i>	<i>Is it right to restrict applying Jesus’ words here to our personal lives? How do you feel about conscientious objectors who seek to apply these words literally to relations between nations. Is there a place for ‘Christian Pacifism’ in today’s world?</i>
Matthew 5:43-48; Romans 5:7-10	What human reasoning might there be behind the practice of loving/ blessing/ praying for our enemies? What reason does Jesus give in vv.45-48? Read the verses from Romans. How will a fresh appreciation of God’s love for us affect the way we view our enemies/ opponents?
Witness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Pray in response to what you have shared from this study, that our church may have a growing reputation as a fellowship of those who love others and that this may be an effective witness of God’s love for everyone. ➤ Focus on people you are connected with who suffer as a result of war – either in this country (e.g. relatives of service personnel, war widows and their dependents, etc.) or abroad (e.g. those supported by charities such as the Barnabas Fund, Amnesty, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Christians Against Torture, etc.). Pray for them, and about whether you should take some action as a result. ➤ Plan – discuss plans for a social gathering for your group/ cluster in the next few weeks; consider inviting people to the <u>Christmas Creativity</u> night on Tues 29th Nov. and/or the Christmas lunch on Monday 5th Dec. (details from office/ website).