



### Love Your Enemies

A hard life made Jeff a hard man, a man seemingly uncomplicated in word or thought. He wrestles with demons, and like many in prison, Jeff's demon is anger. He is reactive rather than reflective, and his reactions are, from time to time, with his fists.

At Prayer and Share, Jeff chose the question, *"Has there been a time where it has been difficult to show Christ's love for another person?"* Jeff described his difficult relationship with a guard who is habitually mean to him. The other Men in White knew the guard he was talking about and had witnessed her frequent acts of cruelty to Jeff.

There is an extreme imbalance of power in the relationship between guards and prisoners. The prisoner must do whatever the guard says. Some guards choose a target and play this little power game over and over. In the bravado culture of prison, even the smallest acts of cruel humiliation torment those who are prone to anger.

Jeff is not one to talk about feelings easily, but he spoke about having to control his anger and of his decision to pray for his tormentor. The Men in White identified a number of other cruel guards. One of the men spoke up, *"It isn't enough that we pray for the mean guards. We have to specifically ask for good things to happen to them."*

We paused, held hands, bowed our heads, and began to pray for the mean guards. The guards were identified by name and very specific blessings were requested for each. When they finished praying for the mean guards, the Men in White began to pray for the kind guards.

Many years ago, one of my bible study mentors said the directive to "love your enemy," was the most difficult command in all of scripture. He said, "It is beyond our human capacity to comply with this command unless you are in a state of constant daily prayer."

The blessings requested by the Men in White could not have been raised without the constant daily prayer necessary for the spiritual maturity to make such a request.

We would be well served to follow the model given by The Men in White, by asking for very specific blessings for those bullies and tyrants who test us, or have wronged us. But first, let us follow their model of constant daily prayer.