

Home Groups | Week of February 7, 2016
Sermon on the Mount | Matthew 5:38-48

Ice Breaker Question:

Lent begins this week with Ash Wednesday [services at ZPC at noon and 7 pm]. Is there anything you want to do more of or less of for Lent?

Read and discuss this week's scripture [Matthew 5:38-48].

1. Jesus' instructions here are a high call on his followers. What do you find most challenging from Jesus' instructions in these verses?
2. A pastor once said, "If you want to be a bridge for Christ, get ready to be walked on." Do you think this is Jesus' intention in this passage and, specifically, in vs. 39? In contrast to this, theologian Dale Bruner suggests "Neither fight nor flight." Instead, "stay and do something surprising." What does this look like in our lives – to stay and do something surprising?
3. Jesus says to love your enemies. Some of us might say, "I don't have any real enemies." If you are one who thinks that, think of the person you want to avoid, who makes you frustrated, who can push your buttons the easiest. Without naming names, describe that person(s) to your group.
4. With the person or persons above, what are ways you can pray for them, show love to them? How can this become real for you this week?
5. Sunday was the Short-term Missions Fair at ZPC. Can you see how going on a short-term mission trip helps you to follow Jesus' call to love those who might be your enemies?
6. Jesus said to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect. Being perfect is hard to understand. One scholar says this means to be "perfectly mature." The Message says to "grow up...live out your God created identity." What does that look like for you?

Prayer:

Keep the following prayer requests from our church family in mind as you close:

- > Prayers of healing for Harry Milli, Phil Carr, Hadley Lehr, and Bryan Dysert.

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Reminders for your group:

Annual Meeting & Dinner | Sunday, February 21 | 5-7 pm | ZPC Gym & Sanctuary
Chili Cook-Off and Movie Night | Saturday, February 27 | 5:30-8:30 pm | Gym & Sanctuary

[Leader's Notes]

Jesus has told us that the greatest commandment is to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. The other commandment that goes with it is to love your neighbor as yourself. Jesus now stretches those commands by saying, love your enemy. Wow – that is really challenging! Let's encourage our group members to think creatively how we pray for and show love to our enemies, and by doing that, we love our neighbor and we love God.

[Question 1] As a leader, you might point your group members towards praying for enemies, turning the other cheek / going a second mile with someone, or giving to the one who begs or asks of you. You might highlight the fact that Jesus calls each of us to take up our own cross and follow Him. Following Jesus takes sacrifice; it's not always easy.

[Question 2] Responding to a tough situation with grace might empower the other person to take advantage of the situation, so how you respond also takes wisdom and creativity. Paul tells us in Philippians to consider others better than ourselves and to look to the interests of others (Phil. 2:3-4). So, think of a way you can do neither "fight nor flight" but do something surprising and gracious.

[Question 3] If we don't have enemies, all of us have people who make us mad or frustrate us – or people we want to avoid. Sometimes they live in our own homes! Who is that for you? How do you feel about that person?

[Question 4] Jesus says to love your neighbor (Matt. 5:43) but he wants even more than that basic command. Jesus' call for a different kind of community which is even more than loving your neighbor or loving those easy to love; it is to show love through actions to those that are hard to love. Pray for God to help you love that person, have patience, and see what God wants you to do. Pray for good things for that person, that God would bless them in good and healthy ways.

[Question 5] Going on a short-term mission trip helps us to put ourselves in uncomfortable places with new people who aren't always like us. Trips like this stretch us and change us to work at loving others who are different. Though the trips may not be with actual "enemies," mission trips and service projects help us interact with people in urban areas, rural Appalachia, or with new people we meet in places like Romania, Brazil, Spain, Mexico, or Egypt.

[Question 6] This is a difficult saying by Jesus. Being perfect may not really mean being perfect – because we can't be perfect. We can be maturing each day – living out who God calls us to be, knowing that we are being sanctified (changed / molded) to be more like Jesus, until the day when we will meet him face to face.