

# And again, it's still a matter of the heart



What matters in life – Sermon on the Mount - Session 4<sup>i</sup> <sup>1</sup>

CITY BIBLE FORUM

*To explore how being a follower of Jesus is a matter of the heart, here involving “loving our enemies” (from Matthew 5:43-48)*

Q1. Think of a really good friend that you have. What makes them a really good friend?



Do you recognize this person? He has apparently been reported to have said: “If someone screws you, screw them back 15 fold”.

It's easy to care for our friends. Jesus goes one step further and asks us to “love our enemies” which is much more challenging – and unnatural.

Before we look at what Jesus has to say about this, let's look at where we are up to in Jesus' “Sermon on the Mount”.

## From previous weeks

The Pharisees, part of the religious leadership of Jesus' day, were extremely zealous in their devotion to God. Basically they adhered to the laws in the Old Testament of the Bible, but managed to add a few others, meaning they had 613 laws in total.

**Matthew 5:20 “For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.”**

**Matthew. 23:25-26 <sup>25</sup>“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. <sup>26</sup>Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.”**

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<sup>1</sup> Scripture taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version, NIV, Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society.

Jesus isn't saying that you have to keep 614 laws, rather than 613, if you want to have a righteousness that's greater than the Pharisees. What he is saying is that following God, being a disciple, is a matter of the heart.

Jesus then goes on to give examples of how God looks at the heart. For example, it's not about whether you murder someone, but about whether you are angry with someone in your heart. And it's not just about whether you commit adultery with someone, but whether you lust after someone in your heart.

## Love your enemies

**Matthew 5:43-44** <sup>43</sup> "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' <sup>44</sup> But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

## Definition of enemy

Q2. How do you understand the word "enemy"?

enemy 1. One who feels hatred toward, intends injury to, or opposes the interests of another; a foe. (thefreedictionary.com)

Q3. Based on this definition, do you have enemies?

*An enemy is someone who opposes your interests. Based on this definition, we could have more "enemies" than we first realized.*

## Love

The Israelites were told to "love their neighbours" as part of the law given to Moses, around 1300BC. The Old Testament says nothing about hating your enemy! By around Jesus' time, the Jews had added "hate your enemy".

Q4. How do you understand the word "love"?

**Romans 5:8** But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Q5. How does this passage from the Bible understand God's love?

*Love is an action as it is something that can be demonstrated. It is an action that works for the best interests of others (Christ died for us when we did not deserve it).*

Q6. So what does Jesus mean, do you think, when he says: "love your enemies?"

*Work for their best interests.*

Q7. How is this not the same as being walked on?

*It's a choice you make to work for their best interests. Allowing someone to walk over you is not a decision that is in their best interests (or yours!).*

Q8. So what kind of things would you pray for someone who is persecuting you?

*Pray for what's in their best interests (the specifics will depend on the situation).*

Q9. Where does the question of justice fit in to all of this?

*Working for their best interests doesn't exclude working for justice.*

### **Motivation**

Obviously loving your enemies is a tough thing to do! Jesus goes on to teach that the motivation to live like this is to be like God.

### **Motivation #1**

**Matthew 5:45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.**

Q10. What's Jesus saying here: "To love your enemies is to be like God and \_\_\_\_\_"?

*Care for all those God has created.*

### **Motivation #2**

**Matthew 5:46-47 <sup>46</sup> If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? <sup>47</sup> And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?**

Q11. What's Jesus saying here: "To love your enemies is to be like God and \_\_\_\_\_"?

*Care not just for those who care for you.*

### **Motivation #3**

**Matthew 5:48 <sup>48</sup> Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.**

The word "perfect" in the language that the Bible was originally written in could mean grown-up, mature, or adult.

Q12. What's Jesus saying here: "To love your enemies is to be like God and \_\_\_\_\_"?

*To be the “grown up” in the relationship: taking the initiative to care and being mature about it.*

**Luke 23:33-34** <sup>33</sup> When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. <sup>34</sup> Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

Q13. What right does Jesus have to say to us: “love your enemies?”

*Every right! He loved his enemies by asking God to forgive those who had nailed him to the cross.*

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