

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### Introduction

We are to mirror God in His moral excellence as well as in other ways. The basic call of a believer in Jesus in this world is to be a reflection of the character of God.

### Discussion

Who is the hardest person for you to love? Why?

### Explanation

Describe when you are "unlovable." What do you do? Is there a person, other than God, who demonstratively loves you when act unlovable? How do they show it?

### Application

 - Read Matthew 5:43-48

How can not confronting someone's poor behavior be unloving? If God is perfect and we are to mirror Him in how we love, give some examples of how God loves.

### Mission

What is the difference between our cultures view loving and the biblical model of loving? Which one of those models do you usually reflect?

### Homework

 - Read Matthew 6:1-4

What things did you once have to be taught to do and now are simply second nature (example: riding a bike)?

## TODAY'S VERSES

*Colossians 3:13*

*Matthew 5:21*

*Matthew 5:43-48*

*Leviticus 19:2*

*Exodus 20:13*

*Exodus 20:3*

*Ephesians 4:30-32*

*Hebrews 10:14*

*Leviticus 11:14*

*2 Corinthians 5:17-20*

*John 13:35*

OUR ELEMENT, OUR HEART

Loving Enemies **22** Matthew 5:43-48



# SERMON

## On The Mount



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# IT WAS SAID

# LOVING ENEMIES

**Colossians 3:13** *"Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."*

The command "Love your neighbor" is found in Leviticus 19:18, but no Old Testament Scripture adds "and hate your enemies." Rabbinic literature as it was later preserved does not usually leap to so bold and negative a conclusion. This has led some commentators today to take this passage as a later Christian mockery of Jewish values. But this couldn't be further from the truth.

The quotation also omits "as yourself," words included in Leviticus 19:19; 22:39; and the attitude reflected ignores the fact that Leviticus 19:33–34 also commands love of the same depth for the sojourner (the resident alien in the land). The popular reasoning seems to have been that if God commands love for "neighbor," then hatred for "enemies" is implicitly conceded and perhaps even authorized.

Jesus allowed no misinterpretation. The real direction indicated by the law is love and extended even to enemies. The content of "love" is not based on a presupposed definition but on Jesus' teaching and example. To love one's enemies, though it must result in doing them good (Luke 6:32–33) and praying for them (Matt 5:44), cannot justly be restricted to activities devoid of any concern, sentiment, or emotion.

The words "those who persecute you" introduce one important kind of "enemy" but does not exclude other kinds. Jesus himself repeatedly warns his disciples of impending persecution (e.g., vv. 10–12; 10:16–23; 24:9–13); so there is little need to doubt the authenticity of the warning here.

One manifestation of love for enemies will be in prayer; praying for an enemy and loving him will prove mutually reinforcing. The more love, the more prayer; the more prayer, the more love. Jesus seems to have prayed for his tormentors while the iron spikes were being driven through his hands and feet; "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). John Stott said, *"If the cruel torture of crucifixion could not silence Jesus' prayer for his enemies, what pain, pride, or...prejudice could justify the silencing of ours?"*

Jesus' disciples, and us, have as our example God himself, who loves so indiscriminately that he sends sun and rain (they are his to bestow) on both the righteous and the unrighteous.

Theologians since Calvin have related God's love in Matthew 5:44–45 to His "common grace" (i.e., the gracious favor God bestows "commonly," without



distinction, on all men). He could with justice condemn all; instead he shows repeated and prolonged favor on all. That is the point here, not that God's love is amoral or without any distinctions whatsoever, but that he shows grace on both the redeemed and lost.

God's example provides the incentive for Jesus' disciples to be (*genēsthe*, more likely "become") sons of their Father (v. 45). The point of the passage is not to state the means of becoming sons, but the necessity of pursuing a certain kind of sonship patterned after the Father's character. DA Carson in his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount says, *"To be persecuted because of righteousness is to align oneself with the prophets (5:12); but to bless and pray for those who persecute us is to align oneself with the character of God."* These verses show that Jesus' disciples must live and love in a way superior to the patterns around them.

*Practically, today, how do we grow through difficult relationships?*

- 1) Keep Jesus as the center
- 2) Make a Choice to love like God loves
- 3) Listen to God's Spirit
- 4) Learn from Jesus

This comes back to verse **48** **You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.** The word translated "perfect" literally means "be complete." When the New Testament and the Old Testament describe people as being upright and righteous it does not mean they have achieved total moral perfection, but rather that they have reached a singular level of maturity in their growth in terms of spiritual integrity.

We are to mirror God in His moral excellence as well as in other ways. The basic call of a believer in Jesus in this world is to be a reflection of the character of God.

## FROZEN FRIDAY

July 25th, 4:30pm  
*Fun for the whole family.*

## YOUTH BBQ FUNDRIASER

July 20, 10:30a-1p  
*\$8 includes chips & drink*

## SERVE SANTA MARIA

August 23rd  
*Saunders@ourelement.org for more info*

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