

Impossible Love

Matthew 5:38-48

³⁸ “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ ³⁹ But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. ⁴⁰ And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. ⁴¹ And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. ⁴² Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you. ⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸ You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Profiles of Impossible Neighbors

Patterns of Impossible Love

Power for Impossible Love

Small Group Study Guide Matthew 5:38-48

Getting Started

This week's passage talks about loving your enemies. What are some popular archenemies in films and on TV?

The Big Idea - Jesus calls us to love even our most difficult neighbors, not merely by refusing to retaliate, but by actively seeking their good. This impossible love reflects our Father's undeserved kindness toward us. While we were his enemies, he gave his Son to reconcile us to himself. His grace supplies both the pattern and the power for loving our enemies.

Digging Deeper

1. Read Matthew 5:38–48. What stands out to you as the most challenging part of Jesus' teaching? Why?
2. The sermon described neighbors who **diss you, cost you, push you, and pull you**. Where do you see these categories in Matthew 5:39–42? Which is hardest for you to respond to with love?
3. Read Luke 10:25–37. Why did the expert in the law ask, "Who is my neighbor?" How do we sometimes redefine our responsibilities to excuse our unwillingness to love?
4. In verses 39–42, how does Jesus call us to go beyond simply refusing to retaliate? What might such love look like in an everyday conflict?
5. How can we seek someone's good while maintaining wise boundaries, addressing wrongdoing, or seeking protection? Why is loving someone different from giving them everything they want?

6. Read verses 43–47. How does our Father treat people who do not love him? What should distinguish his children's love from the love Jesus describes in verses 46–47?
7. Read Romans 12:17–21. How might “overcoming evil with good” look like “being overcome by evil?” How is it different? What lessons should we take from this?
8. Read Romans 5:6–10. What were we like when Christ died for us? How does remembering God's love toward us change the way we see our difficult neighbors?

Making It Real

9. Which is your greater temptation: retaliating, withdrawing, or helping while secretly resenting the person?
10. Think privately of one difficult person in your life. What would it look like to seek their good rather than simply win the conflict? Identify one specific act of kindness you could take this week.
11. Jesus tells us to pray for those who persecute us. What could you sincerely pray for the person you identified? Close by asking God to deepen your gratitude for his grace and give you power to love as he has loved you.