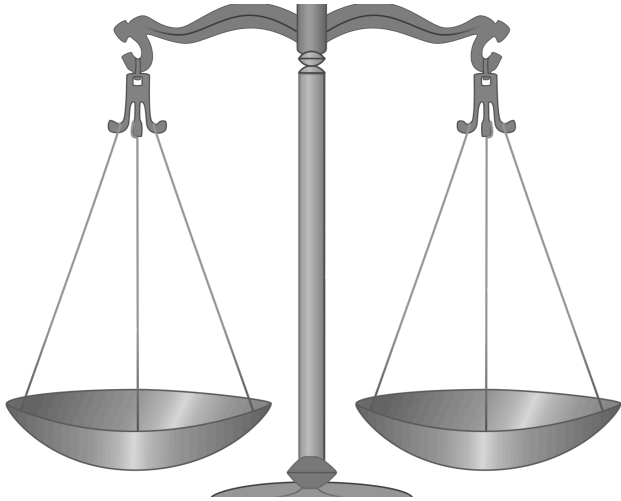


# Love Radically

## Matthew 5:38-48

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The word radical tends to have a negative connotation in our current world. But if you look the word up, its definition is broader. Radical means going to the root or origin, forming a basis or foundation, as well as extreme change from accepted or traditional form.

Jesus was a radical. He was calling for an extreme change from what was currently accepted by the religious establishment. He was preaching that people need to return to the root of their faith, the true foundation—God’s love.

- When in your life were you most radical? Why? How?

### Radical Justice

Read Matthew 5:38-42.

Justice during Jesus’ time was meted out with a heavy hand. The Code of Hammurabi was woven into the application of justice in the Middle East. Hammurabi had been one of the stellar examples of a king reigning justly. But Hammurabi was a Babylonian king and his justice emphasized physical punishment that was equivalent to the crime committed. Since the Israelites were once captives in Babylonia, it is not surprising that this form of justice was also common in their system. But Jesus, the radical rabbi, had a different point of view.

- Have you ever heard someone say, “He deserves to suffer the way I did.” or something similar? Why is “an eye for an eye” not always a fair way to deliver justice?
- In Jesus’ time a slap on the hand or the cheek was an insult. What point is Jesus making when he says to turn the other cheek?
- What does it mean for someone to “go the extra mile”?
- It’s pretty radical to not resist an evil person. The Greek word used in verse 39 and translated in most versions as “resist” is *anthistemi*. Literally it means “stand against” and was a word primarily used in a court of law. If we’re not supposed to stand against evil people in court, then how are we supposed to receive or administer justice?

## Radical Love

Read Matthew 5:43-48.

The Greek word translated in verse 48 as “perfect” is *teleios*. It means to be complete in your work towards the growth of your mental capabilities and your moral character. The only man who was truly complete, truly perfect was Jesus.

- What’s the problem with only praying for and loving those for whom you feel love and concern?
  - We tend to evaluate a person’s character based on their actions. What actions does Jesus recommend we take if we are seeking to be recognized by others as children of God?
  - If you are seeking to become more perfect like Jesus, what needs to improve in your life? Jot down a few ideas and share with your group any that you feel comfortable sharing.
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- Why do you think the title of this week’s lesson is “Love Radically”?

## Living It

**Share** with your group an action you took last week that showed your love for and appreciation of God’s law.

### **This week:**

Name a person who has hurt you. Dedicate time this week to pray for them. Keep a record of each time you pray.

Be prepared to share with the group next week how you felt after praying for them all week.