

THE BIG IDEA: What sets us apart as believers isn't that we love, but how and who we love.

The Take-Off

I've told you early and often since we started this series that this would not be easy or comfortable.

There would be times that we would read these words of Jesus and wonder if it was even possible.

Today is another one of those days.

After dealing with our anger, our lust, our marriages, and our tendency to twist and bend the truth, Jesus is going to have the audacity to suggest - no, to command - something so unrealistic that most of us have spent our entire lives rationalizing it away.

Because isn't that what we do? Instead of getting radical, we get rational.

But Jesus is going to call us to a radical love, not a rational love.

That means that when I read the next 11 verses, everything in you is going to fight to figure out what Jesus meant instead of asking the Holy Spirit to help you figure out how to do what Jesus said.

So my goal today is to talk less so that you can hear the Spirit talk more.

He is the best at taking the truth and showing us how to apply it.

So, with that, let's turn to **Matthew 5:38-48 (NIV)** and read about radical love.

1. HOW we love

- a. Sometimes we can act like Christians are the only ones who can love
- b. We minimize the love an atheist or agnostic or Muslim or whoever may show someone, as if they aren't really loving because they don't love Jesus
- c. But Jesus clearly disputes that in these verses, esp in verses 46 and 47 - tax collectors and pagans love
- d. **What sets us apart as believers isn't that we love, but how and who we love**
- e. You see, Christians - followers of Jesus - are called to love the people who seem impossible to love with a love that seems impossible to give
- f. That kind of love cannot be given without the Holy Spirit - it is truly a supernatural love
- g. Let's take these 11 verses and divide them into 2 sections
- h. The first five give us a picture into **HOW we love** and the next six will deal with **WHO we love**
- i. The first way we're to love is GRACIOUSLY
 - We live in a world that wants revenge - if you hurt me, I'll hurt you
 - **[IMAGES / Revenge]**
 - Jesus sets a new standard
 - Not just don't take equal to what was taken, but give more than what was taken
 - Instead of taking revenge, give grace
- j. That leads to the second way we love - SACRIFICIALLY
 - It will cost us something to love radically
 - Another cheek, a cloak, a second mile
 - When we love like Jesus, we will feel it because Jesus felt it
 - **Luke 24:46 (NIV)** / Jesus suffered
- k. The third way we're to love? GENEROUSLY
 - v. 42 / Give when it's asked; don't turn away the borrower
 - In this way we are like the Father
 - **Ephesians 1:7-8 (NIV)** / lavishes
 - **Matthew 7:11 (NIV)** / how much more
 - **1 Timothy 6:17 (NIV)** / richly supplies us all things
- l. A common response to these verses is to wonder if we really lend to anyone? Turn a cheek to everyone?
- m. I believe that the best response to the Word is "yes" and that when we obey, our obedience opens us up to hear the Holy Spirit when or if He says "no"

2. WHO we love

- a. The first 5 verses revealed HOW we love; the last 6 reveal **WHO we love**
- b. Of course, the names of the people we're to love aren't going to be listed, but the Spirit will bring them to your mind as we go

- c. It's interesting that this is the only time that Jesus doesn't quote an OT command.
- d. Nowhere in the Law were they ever told to hate their enemies
- e. Leviticus 19:18 said to love your neighbor, but the Pharisees had defined neighbor as Jews
- f. Jesus said to love your enemies and to pray for those who persecute you
- g. We sanitize this to mean the person who flipped us off in traffic, but this is more about actual enemies
- h. ISIS, the person who stabbed you in the back, the friend who spread rumors about you
- i. Real live people that you don't like
- j. We're supposed to love them, and that's only possible with love from God
- k. How do we know that? He loved us when we were His enemies ([Romans 5:8, 10 - NIV](#))
- l. Real talk: we're ok loving the broken because it makes us feel like heroes; we're not ok loving our enemies because it makes us feel like targets
- m. Then Jesus finishes up with 2 more WHOs to love
 - v. 46 / people who don't love us
 - v. 47 / people who aren't like us

The Landing

Let me just land this by reminding all of us that the Sermon on the Mount shouldn't make us feel like we can do this

Jesus is revealing who we are and how we'll live as a result of our new identity

Who are we? The forgiven children of God

How will we live? As forgiving children of God

Is it natural to forgive and then love enemies? No.

It's natural to love people who love us.

It's supernatural to love people who hate us.

But that's what reveals the power of God's love.

[\[VIDEO / The power of forgiveness\]](#)