

Week Beginning: 19th February 2017

Worship Series: #4 in series



living sharing growing



Theme Verse

Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Matthew 5:48

Remember This Week

The call to radical love is nothing more than being the person and community God has created you to be, just as God is the One God is supposed to be. God has so much confidence in you and will always call you to be more than you thought you could, returning hate with love, turning the other cheek, praying for those who stand against you. Through his love at work in you, Christ is redeeming, transforming, and drawing people into the life of his kingdom; a life in which they and you can truly flourish.



**Teach me, Lord, the way of your decrees,
that I may follow it to the end.**

Give me understanding, so that I may keep your law and obey it with all my heart.

Direct me in the path of your commands, for there I find delight.

Psalm 119:33-35

Lord God, as we gather in your presence to study your Word, fill us with understanding and insight that we may have the courage to live a life of radical love as dearly loved children of your Kingdom. We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.



1. *Share your highs and lows for the past week?*
2. *Accountability time! How did you go with your living purposefully from last time?*
3. *What's the best Valentine's Day gift/message that you have ever received or given?*
4. *Share a time when someone went that 'extra mile' for you and what difference did it make?*
5. *What's the worst apology that you have ever received?*

Love has been on the lips of many people this past week with the celebration of Valentine's Day. But just consider how we use the word "love" I love meat. I love Holdens. I love serving LifeWay. I love my wife. I love my kids. I love Jesus. The same word was used 6 times but we all know that each time something different and specific was meant. As his disciples, Jesus calls us to love in a radically new way; a way that has no regard to cost but is expansive and open to the outsider. It's a love that is devoted to living the image of Jesus and the life of the Kingdom in every encounter and every relationship, every day. That's the radical love we are going to explore in this study.

Read Matthew 5:38-48

First thoughts/reflections

6. *What is challenging/confusing/surprising about this text?*
7. *What does this passage tell you about the character of God, the missional heart of God?*
8. *In what contexts have you heard people quote 'An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth'?*

Re-read the passage from 'The Message' translation. [Click here](#)

9. *What emphases does this translation bring out that help you understand the text from a different or new perspective?*

John Stott wrote: **This passage brings us to the highest point of the Sermon on the Mount. Nowhere is the challenge of the sermon greater. Nowhere is the distinctness of the Christian counterculture more obvious. Nowhere is our need of the power of the Holy Spirit (whose first fruit is love) more compelling.**

10. *What is the context in which the original saying was spoken? Read Exodus 21:22-24 (you may like to look at all of the chapter). How do these words limit the extent of revenge?*





11. Over the course of time, the Pharisees had moved this principle from the law courts (the original context) to personal relationships. What might have happened as a result?
12. What are some ways that people today try and justify their hatred?

The question that is central in this section is, 'How do you respond when others sin against you?' In the midst of your relationships, how do you respond when people hurt you, criticise you, oppose you, use you or betray you? It is a question that really challenges your heart and motivation toward others.

13. When you feel wronged, are you more prone to be passive, retaliate, gossip, pray or some other response? Why?
14. How would you respond to those who interpret Jesus words here to mean that Christians are simply to be doormats that anyone can walk over?
15. What help/encouragement/advice does Romans 12:17-21 give in situations where people hurt you, oppose you, take advantage of you?
16. How did Jesus live out his own teaching and respond to those who insulted, abused, ridiculed, and mocked him (See Luke 23:32-34)? How did Stephen live out this radical new way of loving (see Acts 7:54-60)?
17. How does God reveal his love for enemies? See Romans 5:8-10. How does that make you re-think your heart/attitude/approach towards those you consider enemies?
18. Jesus teaches us to love our enemies with our words, actions and prayers. Which of these three is the most difficult for you? Why?

In the new righteousness of His Kingdom, Jesus elevates love as the marker which makes his people distinctive. When Jesus says "Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect", he uses the Greek word "teleios" which refers to something or someone who is fully, and completely fulfilling the capacity and purpose of their existence. It does not refer to moral perfectionism but rather expresses the truth that the goal or outcome of your life is to simply be the child of God that he has called you to be, just as God is the One he is supposed to be. As people formed by grace and immersed in his love, he calls you to live a radical life of love, which will turn the world upside down by showing a totally new way of living and being which never quits or gives up on a person, no matter how much hurt they have caused.

God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world. Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love. We love each other because he loved us first. 1 John 4:16-19 (NLT)

Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his classic work, *The Cost of Discipleship* wrote: **The cross is the only power in the world which proves that suffering love can avenge and vanquish evil.** (Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 1965, p.161). He goes on to say **"The love for our enemies takes us along the way of the cross and into fellowship with the Crucified. The more we are driven along this road, the more certain is the victory of love over the enemy's hatred."** (Bonhoeffer, p.166)

19. How have you seen the victory of love overcome hatred, and win over enemies in your own life?
20. Who will you go the extra mile for or turn the other cheek to in the week ahead?
21. Is there anyone whom you fear, dislike, disown, criticize, hold resentment toward, have given up on or are treating like an enemy? If so, what are you going to do about it?' Share.

- * Praise God for his unfailing love that he lavishes on you, even when you don't deserve it. Thank Jesus for turning the other cheek, enduring the insults and even death so that you were no longer considered an enemy but a friend of God. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you intentionally love and pray for those that you are currently treating as enemies for whatever reason.
- * Ask God to forgive you for the times when, in pride, you lashed out or in other ways sought to retaliate. Ask Him to replace bitterness with His love.
- * Pray that as a community, our Church may love in a way that is expansive and inclusive.
- * Pray for our Cambodia brothers and sisters as they reach out in love In the Rainbow Hostel, Phnom Penh, and Tang Krang and Krus villages.

Turn to the person next to you and make the sign of the cross on the palm of their hand or forehead as you say:

Name, may Christ's love in you, flow through you. Amen.

