**Calvary Fellowship 5.1.2022 Matthew 5:33-48 “Love Requires More”**

* **So my son is almost 13, but when he was 5 & I was building this building, he was getting on my case b/c he said I’d been working too much**
* I was leaving for church & he said, “Dad, you’re going to work again? When are we going to spend some time together?”
* So that Friday I said to him, “Xander, I know U said I’ve been working too much. I want to make it up to U. How about we spent the whole day together on Sat?”
* He said, “Can I just have $20 bucks instead?”
* I said, “No. I thought we’d have fun together. You know, just the boys.”
* He said, “OK. Well, can I have $20 anyway b/c I’m spending the day w/ U?”
* So Monday morning he says, “Dad, if I read this book. Can I have some $?”
* U have to understand that I pay my kids to read books - it’s the best money I’ve ever spent - Xander is 9 & he’s doing 5th grade work
* So as a 5 yr old, he pulls out a 70 pg book w/ no pics that’s a 3rd grade level & says, “How much if I read this book?” - I thought, “He’ll never read this.”
* “I’ll give U a dollar per chapter.” So he started school & I leave for the office
* At 2PM I get a call from Xander & he says, “Dad, I finished the book. When can I expect my $8 payment?”
* I said, “Kid, you’re 5 not bill collector. Stop talking like that b/c you’re freaking me out. Put your mom on the phone.”
* I talk to Carey & she says, “Bob, he read the whole book.” - I said, “Tell him to explain the story.” - She says, “He already did. He totally understood the book.”
* So Carey puts Xander on the phone & I say, “OK Xander, your mom is going to give U the $8. By the way, why do U need this money?”
* He says, “Remember on Saturday when we went to Toys R Us?” - Yes
* I saw this game that Mia & Olivia would love & I want to buy it for them
* I said, “So this whole time, you’ve been wanting to earn money so U could spend it on your sisters while I’ve been busting your chops? I’m sorry buddy.”
* He says, “Thanks dad. By the way, what does ‘bust your chops’ mean?”
* “It means, um…I’m a good dad.” - “OK. Thanks for busting my chops dad”
* My son was showing me what love looks like
* Here’s what happens - sometimes we think the idea of love or the feeling of love gets us out of doing the actions of love - when the opposite is actually true
* Love inspires us to do more than the law or the rules could ever require
* In fact, you’ll find throughout the NT that the motivation for everything that we are commanded to do is never based on law, but the higher law of love
* **So as we continue in our series, “The Story” we’re going to pick up where left off last week which was basically in the middle of a conversation**
* Jesus is quoting the OT law & saying “that’s what the law says, but love requires more” & He’s going to talk about moments when we need wisdom
* And for many of us, our marriages, relationships, & friendships suffer b/c we operate based on law rather than operating based on love
* These are what I call “Ledger people” - people that are always making sure that things are even - “I did the dishes last night, so it’s your turn tonight”
* “It’s your turn to take out the garbage w/ I did it last time” - “I filled up the car last week. So U take out a 2nd mortgage so U can fill it up this week”
* And listen, that’s a great way to get out of chores, but it’s terrible way to live
* B/c love doesn’t keep score - love isn’t trying to get even - love is trying to do more than it required - b/c that’s when love is seen
* So how does that work practically? What does love require in my daily life when I’m going about my business? How do I put that into practice?
* **Jesus is going to give 3 examples of how this plays out**
* So if you’re wondering how to speak in a way that truthful but also loving, listen in to what Jesus is say
* If you’re in a relationship or a friendship w/ someone who is very demanding, then take notes b/c Jesus is going deal w/ that
* If you’re in an adversarial situation right now w/ a former coworker, or a former spouse, or a friendship that went sideways, Jesus is giving us wisdom now…

**———(v. 33-37)———**

**#1 - Love Requires that I Speak Honestly**

* **Now, this passage is so interesting b/c it’s building off of the case law surrounding the 10 commandments**
* So let me build the case for U to see what Jesus is dealing with
* “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.” (Exodus 20:7)
* In this culture, U couldn’t say, “The Lord told me to do this” if U weren’t sure b/c that would be using Gods name in vain
* It’s not referring to cursing as much as it’s referring to invoking God’s name in a meaningless way - that’s what vain means - vanity
* When Moses repeats the law in Deuteronomy, he gives more explanation on this & shows how people can use God’s nam in vain when they make vows
* “That which has gone from your lips you shall keep and perform, for you voluntarily vowed to the Lord your God what you have promised with your mouth.” (Deuteronomy 23:23)
* But what happened is that they developed this intricate system of vows where only certain vows that U made mattered
* “Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.’ Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold? And, ‘Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged to perform it.’Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift? Therefore he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it. He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him who dwells in it.And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it.” (Matthew 23:16-22)
* Do U see the progression here? It started out as, “Don’t invoke God’s name needlessly.” - Later it was, “If U do invoke God’s name, U have do it.”
* Then it became, “You’re exempt from doing what U said b/c of a technicality”
* Jesus is saying,” U can’t promise to do something & then think it’s ok not to b/c U didn’t swear by the gold in the temple to do it” - that’s not how integrity works
* Jesus is saying, “When U say you’re going to do something, that’s the end of the conversation.” - Why? b/c that’s what love requires
* When U got married, U made a promise before God to stay together no matter what - your commitment was to stay in love w/o a plan B
* B/c here’s the reality - falling in love is easy - U can fall in love w/ anyone
* Some people fall in love w/ people they’ve never met - ask teenage girl & she’ll tell u she’s in love w/ Tom Holland or the guy who plays Thor
* Which for the record, big muscles, long blonde hair, & he’s rich - I hate him
* Falling in love is easy - staying in love is the tricky part b/c it has little to do w/ feelings & everything to do w/ our actions, intentionality, & integrity
* It has to do w/ yes being yes & no fingers crossed or technicalities
* “Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.” (Proverbs 27:6)
* **Here’s what happens - when we aren’t honest w/ each other, we create separation in the relationship & then issues build inside of us**
* That’s why when relationships end, it’s almost never 1 thing - everyone says, “It was a million little things” - but we never talked about those things
* That’s why they built up into an avalanche until it spun out of control
* This is why we have to learn to be honest w/ each other b/c destroying each other in the process - we have to learn to speak the truth in love
* **When my son started crawling, Mia couldn’t have been be happier**
* The only downside is that she thought Xander was her plaything b/c she treated him like 1 of her dolls - 1 day I caught her picking him up & carrying him around
* 1 of the rules in our house was that 4 years olds can’t carry 1 year olds
* She had a hard time obeying that rule, so she’d do it when we weren’t looking
* 1 day Carey stepped out & I was watching the kids - I walked out of the room & I said, “Mia, don’t pick up your brother.”
* I returned 2 minutes later b/c I heard Xander make a noise, & Xander was on the couch, not on the floor - I ran over & put him on the floor
* Then I asked Mia, “Mia, how did your brother get on the couch?”
* She says, “I don’t know Papi.” I say, “Mia, there’s only 3 ways this could have happened. Let’s run through them together:
* #1 - U picked him up/ #2 - He learned to fly as well as crawl/ #3 human teleportation - “Mia, which of these 3 was it?” - “Flying Papi. He can fly.”
* My daughter was willing to say her brother was turning into a superhero before she told me the truth - We do this at 3 & we do it at 33
* When we lie to someone, even to save their feelings, while sometimes noble, we dishonor them b/c we’re saying that lack the maturity to handle the truth
* And at the same time, we lack the maturity to share the truth in a way that people an receive - truth w/o love is brutality & love w/o truth is hypocrisy
* That’s why Jesus is telling us to let our yes be yes & our no be no
* This way people can trust what we say to them - that’s integrity & that is the most loving thing we can do - to be believable & trustworthy

**———(v. 38-42)———**

**#2 - Love Requires that I Win the Relationship**

* **This is a challenging passage b/c we are 2,000 years & 1/2 a world away**
* But when God established this law in the Torah - it’s mentioned 3 times & it is not given to the average person - it is a command for the courts
* And the reason for it that the punishment should not exceed the crime - why?
* B/c if someone knocks 1 of your teeth out, do U want to knock 1 of theirs out?
* No - U want to knock all of their teeth out & this command it reigning the punishment & it is preventing people from taking matters in their own hands
* B/c what happens when U knock all that guy’s teeth out? Is it over? No
* He’s going to escalate as well & it will keep escalating until someone dies
* But Jesus is taking a governing law that was meant to limit retribution & bring balance & justice & makes it personal in how we bring balance interactively
* B/c “eye for an eye” is all about justice, but the reality is, the best the law can do is get us even - but love is the only thing that can win the relationship
* Which is why Jesus is criticizing what the religious leaders had done - they were using this verse as a means to feel justified over being violent
* The problem is, vengeance never does what U want it to do
* **I have 3 kids - so while things have given easier as they’re gotten older**
* Being a dad for years was like being a perpetual referee in a hockey game
* I spent much of my time at home breaking up fights, calling timeouts & sending them to the penalty box, which is a chair they have in their room
* Each of the kids has a chair in their room that they get sent to when they misbehave - Honestly, I don’t even understand how this strategy works
* They do something wrong, so I send them to the place where they keep all of their toys so they can learn a lesson
* I wish my mom & step-dad had learned about time-out when I was growing up
* B/c we didn’t have time out - we only had knockout
* 1 of the things we make the kids do when they fight is they have to apologize, then the other person has to say, “I forgive U”
* Then we make them hug for 20 seconds - they hate it, but I love it
* And if they count too fast, I double the time
* **A while back, all 3 of them got into an argument Livi hit her brother & Xander threw something off Mia’s b/c he’s not allowed to hit his sisters**
* Xander comes over & starts to tell the story & Olivia says, “I’m going” & she puts herself in timeout - I thought it was great
* I told Carey, “They’re disciplining themselves. If we can teach them to cook for themselves, we don’t have to take them on vacation w/ us”
* So I tell Carey, “Don’t worry about it. I’ll handle this 1.”
* So I’m talking to Mia & Xander what I meant to say was, “I know U want to hit your brother” - but what I said was, “Do U want to hit your brother?”
* Xander looks at me like, “Wait. What?” - And Mia punches him square in the chest & he went down like Rocky in his 1st fight w/ Clubber Lang
* I’m in shock - my wife steps in, realizing I’m not equipped to handle disputes of this magnitude & she makes them do nice things for each other
* Listen, kindness did what no amount of revenge could ever accomplish
* “Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable.” (Romans 12:17)
* This is the point Jesus is making when He illustrates it practically for them
* **Roman soldiers could compel you by law to carry their bags for 1 mile**
* That was a law in the Empire & soldiers lorded it over the people they ruled
* But Jesus is saying, “If you forces you to go 1 mile, go 2.” Why?
* B/c when I walk the 2 mile by choice, it makes both of them by choice & now I’m no longer your servant who is forced to serve - I’m equal who’s helping U
* **If someone slapped U in the face**, which was like being spit in the face today, to give him the other to slap was unheard of – Why would someone do that?
* Well, Roman soldiers tended to be right-handed - When they struck an equal w/ a fist, it came from the right & made contact with the left side of the face
* When they struck an inferior person, they swung with the back of their right hand making contact w/ the right cheek.
* In the Roman/ Greek culture, they made clear distinctions between classes, so Roman soldiers backhanded their subjects to make a point
* That whoever they were hitting was a 2nd class person
* Jesus says, “If they slap your right cheek, offer them your left b/c in doing so you’re demanding that they treat U as an equal”
* **If someone wanted your cloak**, (jacket), to give them your tunic (T-shirt) as well wastotally insane - this is 1 of those times where the Bible is being modest
* In those times, you only wore 2 things – your cloak & you tunic under it
* So Jesus is saying, “If someone wants you jacket, give them your underwear as well. If you’ve got the fruit of the Spirit, so who needs the fruit of the loom!”
* Here’s the point - kindness, which is the verb form of love, can do what revenge or retribution or “eye for an eye” thinking can never do
* Here’s what U need to decide - do U want to win the argument or win the relationship? B/c sometimes don’t get to have both
* So how do U turn the other cheek practically? I had someone walk up to me recently & they were super rude & here’s what I know - I’m very quick & I could have responded in like kind & cut even deeper
* But instead I said, “Man, that as really rude. So here’s what we’re going to do. I’m going to have U walk away & then walk bak up to me & try that again.”
* And it worked out great - he learned the lesson & we won the relationship
* And this works w/ your kids, w/ people U work with, or your in-laws
* B/c letting people walk all over U isn’t healthy & it’s not what Jesus is saying
* Instead, give people the opportunity to be respectful & if they aren’t, teach them to be respectful w/o U having to be disrespectful towards them
* And the result is, it allows U to be treated the way U should be treated & it wins the relationship…

**———(v. 43-48)———**

**#3 - Love Requires that I Do Good to All**

* **The Bible doesn’t actually state to love your neighbor & hate your enemies - that’s what the religious leaders in Jesus’ day taught**
* They believed that U should love your neighbor as yourself - that didn’t originate here - that’s actually out of the book of Leviticus
* “You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.” (Leviticus 19:18)
* They understood that to mean U should love people who love God & hate the enemies of Israel - but there’s a problem w/ that thinking
* **How do U lead someone to become a lover of God? By loving them**
* This is what God does - He sends rain & sunshine to those who love Him & even to those who don’t
* Now remember, this was an agrarian culture - so U could wake up early & till the ground & scatter your seed & work the land
* But U couldn’t make it rain & U couldn’t force your way into sunshine
* Instead, those were blessings of God that come to U whether you’re a Christian or not - theologians call this “common grace”
* This is blessing that comes to all people no matter if they’re a Christian or not
* **But think about it - God blesses people who hate Him**
* Before knowing God, we were far from Him - we weren’t doing what pleased Him & His response was not to blast us into oblivion
* Instead, He chose to love us into the kingdom of God
* And now that we know Him, He is asking us to join His team of loving people into the kingdom - the problem is, we don’t naturally think this way
* When we sin, we think about our circumstances & how no one’s perfect & how lots of factors were involved & God should forgive us
* But when someone sins against us though, no factors matter - nothing can be added into evidence - U sinned against me & now you’re dead to me
* **1 day I was picking up my kids from school & a guy cut me bad & I started yelling about how there’s never a cop when an injustice is taking place**
* So I’m planning to make a right & the line is so long, so I get in the middle lane, get to the intersection & go to make a right from the middle lane
* However, the guy in the right turn lane has the option to go straight… and he does - so as I’m turning right from the middle lane, he goes straight
* And I cut that guy off worse than anyone has been cut off since the world began - but I look in the mirror & there’s a cop at the light
* 5 minutes before I was calling on God to judge that guy for his terrible driving
* 5 minutes later, I became that guy & I was praying for God to forgive me & that I’ll never cut off another person again
* This is the point Jesus is making - we want God to forgive us - we want to be kind to the people who love us - but everyone does that
* What separates Jesus followers from everyone else is that we see the big picture - we are trying to win the relationship way more than win the argument
* And ultimately, that attitude is what will change your relationships
* **That’s why Jesus says, “Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect”**
* Now, this doesn’t mean we’re going to reach a state of sinless perfection
* If U do ever get to the point where U think you’re sinless, ask your spouse, they probably have a running tab of all of your errors
* Bu the word perfect is the Greek word “teleios” & it’s translated most of the time as mature or complete - so a better way to understand it is to say, “How would God respond in this situation?” Maturely & wisely - ok. That’s what I want to do
* But too often, we don’t respond maturely or wisely - we respond emotionally & self-righteously b/c we are addicted to being right
* Listen, this is why couples call is quits - they are fixated on the rules - they are quoting verses at each other & missing the point completely
* That U can’t experience the benefits of love when you’re quoting the law
* **This is why we have a hard time w/ difficult people at work - we start quoting our job description rather than seeing beyond that**
* Listen - hurt people hurt people - and the only way to get hurt people to stop hurting people is to start loving them beyond what the law requires
* Here’s where we balk at this b/c we say, “But they don’t deserve it” - I know they don’t deserve it - that’s why our call to love isn’t based on law
* Jesus invites us on a journey where we love as he has loved us
* Being deserving isn’t what repairs relationships - kindness is what does
* And Jesus is telling us that we can’t live like this - U can’t have a scorched earth philosophy & think that’s going to bring good fruit in our lives
* And I know we all have a story to tell of how we were wronged & we were in the right to walked away & people will nod & agree & tell us we’re right
* But the relationship will be lost - b/c we can’t have the fruit of love when we’re holding everyone to the letter of the law
* Jesus is inviting on a different journey - to love others as He has loved us
* That means there’s no loopholes, there’s no workarounds, there’s no 1 who gets excluded from that - in fact, people don’t even get to exclude themselves
* Why? B/c we are to love as He loved us - And when we do, the things that we could have held on to that break relationships, love is able to mend…