



Love Your Ideological Enemy: Matthew 5:38-48

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Group Leader Notes

Welcome to our second and last message in our mini-series, *Break Points*, where we look at Christians navigating the complex topic of political engagement. Last week we asked, “Could we agree to disagree?” Today, based on Jesus’ teaching, we want to ask, “Can we actually love our ideological enemy?”

Question: How do we love our ideological enemy?

Bottom Line: In loving our ideological enemy, we can experience the limitless power of God’s love and life in Jesus’ kingdom.

Take Home Message:

Christianity is not passive. There is fight, but it’s with words, not with swords, guns, and the vitriol and rhetoric we see daily. We fight with love. The same type of love Jesus modeled and called us to.

Main Scripture Reading: Matthew 5:38-48

³⁸ ‘You have heard that it was said, “Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.”^[a] ³⁹ But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. ⁴⁰ And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. ⁴¹ If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. ⁴² Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

⁴³ ‘You have heard that it was said, “Love your neighbor ^[b] and hate your enemy.” ⁴⁴ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶ If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? ⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Other Scripture References

Matthew 6:33

Exodus 20:16

Galatians 5:22

Teaching Points:

When we grow in Jesus' teaching of loving our ideological enemies, we can learn 3 things:

- In loving and forgiving our enemies, we can experience freedom
- In loving and humanizing our enemies, we can experience freedom
- In loving our ideological enemy, we can experience the limitless power of God's love and life in Jesus' Kingdom

Group Discussion

Begin in prayer before reading and discussing the text.

1. Pastor Tim began with how baseball culture has hyped up the Yankees-Red Sox rivalry to grab your attention. Can you think of other rivalries or competitors in sports or other domains where opposing sides don't truly hate each other but need to generate some buzz to sell tickets and increase viewership?
2. Pastor Tim defined ideology as a set of opinions and beliefs representing an individual or a group of people. He expanded the idea of *enemy* to include those we care about (loved ones) but are in sharp disagreement with and also those we don't know enough to be in relationship with. Who comes to mind when you think of your ideological enemy?
3. David French, co-author of *The After Party*, talks about how we dehumanize our ideological enemies. To paraphrase:

"It's a process of minimization, exaggeration, and the us versus them dichotomy inevitably dehumanizes the other side. And it's tempting to villainize and dehumanize them ... make them easier to disagree with ... makes it easier for your side to win."

 - Discuss some examples of dehumanization that you have seen on your newsfeed, social media or other outlets in recent weeks. Discuss how you can limit your own exposure to this.
4. Read Galatians 5:22 together:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

 - Do any of these stand out as more helpful in loving your ideological enemy? Explain why.
5. Pastor Tim concluded the sermon with two examples of what loving your enemies looks like: Pastor Richard Rhodes and a friend, Caleb. Ask your group to go back to the person they chose in question 2 (ideological enemy) and to discuss specific ways that can demonstrate love for them.

Let's Pray