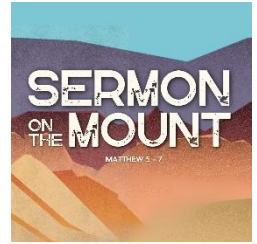


# The Sermon on the Mount: Loving Enemies

## Lesson 9: November 10 & 11

**Read Matthew 5:38-48**



**Sermon Reflection Question:** What captured your attention from Sunday's sermon?

*In this week's passage of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus reinterprets "an eye for an eye" and calls His followers to radical, sacrificial love—even toward enemies. We will see how Jesus fulfills the law and how we are to live as his disciples in his countercultural kingdom. Jesus teaches about judicial retribution in v. 38 by quoting from the Torah, "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' This famous line is known as the law of retaliation.*

1. Read the following text and summarize their teaching on this topic: Leviticus 24:19-20
2. How might the law of retaliation seem like a license for revenge? Where do you see this today?

*Some think that this teaching on judicial retribution encouraged revenge; however, this law limited punishment to fit the crime. While the law curbs the escalation of harmful retaliation, it doesn't create peace between parties. Jesus' aim is peacemaking.*

3. Read v. 38-39. Jesus said, "Do not resist an evil person", but this does not mean to do nothing Romans 12:17-21 provide insight on Jesus' approach?
4. Jesus offers 4 examples in v. 39-41 of how his teaching on non-retaliation is not an abrogation of the law but a fulfillment of it. What main point is found in the below examples:
  - a. "The Slap": To slap someone was not to physically harm them, but to damage their honor and public reputation. How might offering the other cheek demonstrate the kingdom of God?
  - b. "The Tunic": If someone is suing you and trying to take your one main piece of clothing (also used as your sleeping blanket), Jesus says to give them your shirt too. How might this shock the oppressor's conscience?

- c. "Two Miles": Carrying a load for one mile was the legal limit for forced labor, but Jesus calls on the disciples to offer another. How might this disrupt an inequality of power into a human connection?
  - d. "Freely Give": What happens when we are generous beyond our normal habits and comfort zone?
5. How do you typically respond when you are wronged or treated unfairly? How does Jesus' teaching and wisdom from these 4 examples challenge that response?

*If Jesus' followers are to reject personal retaliation and revenge, they are to practice love as a symbolic act. This shows the disciple's identity and sense of security is grounded in something other than their culture's system of honor, status, and possession.*

Now, let's move on to Jesus' teaching to love even our enemies. Read v. 43-47.

*The commandment to love one's neighbor echoes Old Testament law (Leviticus 19:18); the additional command to "hate your enemy" is an oral tradition that was introduced in Jesus' day from a misunderstanding of the Old Testament about enemies of God and Israel.*

6. In v. 44, what radical instruction does Jesus give?
7. Jesus challenges his followers to share love outside their circles of comfort, and he holds up God's indiscriminate, generous love as the model. How does God the Father exemplify blessing those who are evil (v. 45)? What does this teach us about God's character?

*The word love here refers to a chosen attitude and the resulting action, rather than primarily an emotion or feeling. Notice how "love" is paired with prayer and providing water in v. 44-45, and later greeting and hospitality in v. 47. These are "love" actions. This love extends beyond simply non-retaliation to actively seek the good of their persecutors. It's not just refraining from revenge or retaliation, but taking a positive action.*

8. As you consider how to apply v. 43-47 to your life, for whom do you need to start praying? What practical steps can you take to pray for, serve, or show kindness to someone difficult in your life?

9. "Love" summarizes Jesus' sermon teachings so far.
  - a. What similarities do you see between Jesus' teaching on love in v. 43-45 and in the opening sections of the sermon in v. 3-16?
  - b. Is there a specific teaching the Holy Spirit is highlighting for you to continue reflecting and seeking His guidance and help? Share with a group member.

Read v. 48. *Jesus says, "be teleios, just as your heavenly Father is teleios." Remember what we learned in Lesson 4 about the Greek word, teleios. Jesus is forming a community of new humans, whose nature reflects that of their creator. Jesus looks behind the laws into the very heart and character of God.*

10. How does God's model of indiscriminate love for *all* people serve as a good summary of the kind of life to which Jesus has called his people so far in the Sermon on the Mount?
11. What is one area where God is calling you to greater maturity in love?
12. How will Jesus go on from here to show he is the ultimate example of the character traits he has taught thus far? In what ways will you pause and praise Jesus today?

*"Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that. Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend." -Martin Luther King Jr.*