

## The Words, Ways, and Works of Jesus

### Discussion Guide for Life Group Leaders

Week 3: April 25, 2021

#### **Love Your Enemies:** Matthew 5:43-48

- This is a challenge to us as disciples of Jesus to see and react differently.
- The upside-downness of the Jesus way
- A new posture in the face of difficulty

#### **Three levels of relationships:** *(generally)*

- **Strangers:** the check-out line, the slow driver, the rude customer service person
- **Acquaintances & Friends:** neighbours, co-workers, weird uncle
- **Family & Close Friends:** your sister you haven't spoken to in five years, your ex-wife, your son that just doesn't listen to you

#### **"Don't let the sun go down on your anger." (Ephesians 4:26-27)**

- Sometimes it's better to just go to sleep...
- It's not necessarily the anger that is wrong in itself...it is the action that comes out of it.
- We need to see the person we're angry at through God's eyes.
- **How can anger lead us to fruitfulness?** I.e. irritation driving our action for change

- "[Toxic anger] is not restorative; it is retaliatory and punitive, vengeful and aggressive, unrestrained and unconfined. Toxic anger doesn't leave things better. It makes things worse."  
Scott Sauls

- Praying for those we are angry with...it begins a heart change in us (Denise's hockey story).
  - Change your perspective on this. See the good in everyone around you rather than dragging your suitcase full of issues to this place. This activity is a blessing but I had an active role to play in that – had a choice to enjoy it, making a choice to put behind all of those things that irritated me.
- "The more love, the more prayer; the more prayer, the more love."
- We need to gain God's perspective instead of staying in these emotions.
- Praying for people who persecute us changes us more than it does them.
- Feelings will follow – this is difficult – at first you are gritting your teeth as you are praying, but as you get to know God's character, especially his love, he begins to change you.
- God loves all prayers, even messy ones. As you say these messy prayers to God, at the same time you are expressing and setting aside your feelings. Saying it angrily, but by doing so, you

are actually releasing it completely to God and God loves it when we do that...when we are brutally honest. It's not perfect mind you, but brutally honest and bring the issue to him. Our feelings eventually catch up with our actions—they start to line up together and the anger starts to dissipate.

- We leave the justice part to God and we surrender our feelings, our angry and our ugliness.
- As we do that, we are also humbled—we see in ourselves that we aren't perfect either.
- Both a setting aside of our own emotions and a new perspective arises through this.

- "Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea until they have something to forgive." C.S. Lewis

### **This is a Character Issue**

- Jesus concludes: "But you are to be perfect, even as your father in heaven is perfect."
- "We can rejoice, too, when we run into **problems and trials**, for we know that they help us develop **endurance**. And endurance develops strength of **character**, and character strengthens our **confident hope** of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment." (*Rom 5:3-5*)
- A life totally lived by the will of God reflecting God's character – this is our goal.

- "Love your neighbour" involves emotion and action

- Jesus prayed for those crucifying him. If the cruel torture of crucifixion could not silence his prayers...

- That person that yelled at us, mistreated us is also loved by God – just as much as he loves us – that person that we are angry with is also a child of God, so special, so loved and is given the same grace that we ourselves are given.

- We can get bitter if we hold onto anger – Jesus equates it with murder. That's how serious its effect is.

- So the experience of anger is in itself the same...but there is a choice to stay in it or not stay in it.

- Some anger is justified and can lead to good things, like when there is injustice...Jesus flipped tables. Maybe some of us have our greatest volunteer experiences because we got angry and chose to help someone out because we just couldn't stand the injustice taking place.

- Jesus chooses to love us even though he doesn't love our sins. An example is the woman caught in adultery: he does not condone the behaviour, but he forgives and loves the sinner. Jesus doesn't base his actions on our sin, he focuses on the love.

## JESUS

*When was Jesus ever angry?*

<sup>3</sup> Jesus said to the man with the deformed hand, “Come and stand in front of everyone.” <sup>4</sup> Then he turned to his critics and asked, “Does the law permit good deeds on the Sabbath, or is it a day for doing evil? Is this a day to save life or to destroy it?” But they wouldn’t answer him.

<sup>5</sup> **He looked around at them angrily and was deeply saddened by their hard hearts.** Then he said to the man, “Hold out your hand.” So the man held out his hand, and it was restored! <sup>6</sup> At once the Pharisees went away and met with the supporters of Herod to plot how to kill Jesus. *(Mark 3:3-6)*

<sup>18</sup> And whenever this spirit seizes him, it throws him violently to the ground. Then he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast out the evil spirit, but they couldn’t do it.” <sup>19</sup> **Jesus said to them, “You faithless people! How long must I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring the boy to me.”** <sup>28</sup> Afterward, when Jesus was alone in the house with his disciples, they asked him, “Why couldn’t we cast out that evil spirit?” *(Mark 9:18-19, 28)*

<sup>22</sup> But Peter took him aside and began to reprimand him for saying such things. “Heaven forbid, Lord,” he said. “This will never happen to you!” <sup>23</sup> **Jesus turned to Peter and said, “Get away from me, Satan! You are a dangerous trap to me. You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God’s.”** *(Matthew 16:22-23)*

### **Clearing the Temple: Mark 11:17**

- Selling in the outer court
- Stumbling block to the Gentiles (only place they could worship)
- On one of their largest celebrations: Passover

### **Questions for Discussion:**

1. When was the last time you were angry about something dumb?
2. What is often your personal knee-jerk reaction to offense from a friend or acquaintance? Would you say you tend towards “fight” or “flight”?
3. Can you think of a time when you were able to turn a difficult situation with someone into a positive experience?
4. Are you currently in a situation of offence with someone close to you? Considering our discussion today, can you see a new way to approach this situation in a positive way?