



## WEEK 3

### READ

Scripture: [Matthew 5:38-42](#)

Jesus covers several specific scenarios in this passage: being slapped in the face, losing possessions in a lawsuit, and being forced into service by a king's messenger. What do these situations have in common? They capture moments when his listeners would feel wronged, insulted, inconvenienced, or embarrassed. The crucial question Jesus raises is how we respond in these moments. The first-century Jewish culture (like ours today) often taught people to fight back, to take "an eye for an eye." But principles of justice, when taken into our own hands, cease to be justice and instead become revenge and retaliation.

### REFLECT

In what situations do you tend to adopt the mindset of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth"?

Describe a time when someone else has shown you mercy or forgiveness instead of retaliating against you.

### RESPOND

In this weekend's sermon, we were challenged to commit to pray for an "enemy." You may not have an enemy per se (more on that in the next devotional), but write down the name of someone you have a hard time loving. Pray for that person every day this week.

## **READ**

Scripture: [Matthew 5:43-48](#)

It can be easy to skip over a passage like this one, since Jesus is focusing on love for our “enemies.” Many of us may simply shrug our shoulders and move on because we don’t have any enemies. But take a closer look at verses 46 and 47. Jesus’ point is vitally important to our lives. It’s easy to love people we already like, who first love us, and who have a lot in common with us! Everyone does this, Jesus says. What sets apart the Christian is love for people we don’t like, who despise us, or who are profoundly different from us. How is your love for people of a different religion, race, generation, political party, or sexual orientation?

## **REFLECT**

Which specific people or groups of people do you tend to view as “enemies”?

Why do you have trouble loving these particular people or groups of people?

Describe God’s love for people who are far away from him.

## **RESPOND**

Share with a friend about your struggle to love the person or people you wrote about above. Then pray together for that person or group of people.

## **READ**

Scripture: [Luke 23:32-43](#)

Love is hard. It can feel impossible to love the person who cuts us off in traffic or the meter maid who gives us a parking ticket. The smallest inconvenience can trigger our anger or sadness and rob us of our ability to love. Then there are the actual hurts and wounds of being in relationship with people. But consider Jesus in today's passage. He is being beaten and killed in front of a crowd, and he still manages to speak words of mercy and forgiveness. There is a reservoir of love within his soul that cannot be destroyed by any circumstance. If we ask him, he will help us see others the way he sees them. He knows how to love the unlovable.

## **REFLECT**

In this passage (and the entire passion narrative of Luke 22:47-23:49), in what ways does Jesus model love for "enemies"?

Why and how was Jesus able to genuinely love the very people who were beating, mocking, and killing him?

## **RESPOND**

As you continue to pray for your "enemies" this week, ask the Holy Spirit to transform your view of that person or people. Ask for help to love them the way Jesus does.