

**Welcome to the
Common Ground Café!**



Sunday, March 31, 2019

**Limitless Love
A Study of Matthew 5:43-48**

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Describe the best experience you've had with next-door neighbors. Then describe the *worst* experience you've had with next-door neighbors.

Today we wrap up a sermon series called "The Spartan Call." The Spartans were legendary for shaping their men into an elite fighting force. In Matthew 5, Jesus recruited us to heed his "Spartan Call." In verses 21-48, he issued six of his toughest challenges.

The sixth of these six challenges has to do with refusing to set limits on whom we will love and serve. Read Matthew 5:43-48.

In this passage when Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said...", he was referring to passages like Leviticus 19:18. Read that passage.

In Leviticus 19:18, the word "neighbor" was a reference not to those on your street but those of your same religious convictions. Read Galatians 6:10 and 1 Peter 2:17 and answer the following questions:

- ❖ True or False: These verses tell us we have a **special** obligation to love and serve those who share our faith.
- ❖ True or False: These verses tell us we have an **exclusive** obligation to love and serve **only** those who share our faith.

By Jesus's day, many people began to think that as long as I love those of my faith and nation (my "neighbor"), I have no obligation to anyone else. Read Luke 10:25-29 and explain how this passage helps us to see how urgently people in Jesus's day wanted to have an exact definition of the "neighbor" that they were obligated to love.

In Luke 10:29, Jesus was asked to define "neighbor" because the man "wanted to justify himself." What does this mean?

In Luke 10:30-37, Jesus answered the man's question with a story. Read those verses and explain how the story defined the "neighbor" we are to love.

In Matthew 5:43-48, Jesus said loving even our enemies will serve as proof that we're God's kids. Pastor Tom said that there are four reasons why this

is true. Use your sermon notes to complete the following blanks as you discuss them.

First: Imitate your Father's a _____.

When you were a child, did you try to imitate your father? If so, in what ways?

According to Matthew 5:45, in what ways does God take care of the "righteous" and the "unrighteous" equally? Are there other ways that God takes care of the "righteous" and the "unrighteous" than just these farming examples?

Make a list of ways we can imitate our Father in the way we care for the "righteous" and the "unrighteous." Think about workplace policies, religious liberty for people of other faiths, responding to victims of natural disasters, etc.

Second: Gain your Father's p _____.

Read Genesis 1:27.

What does it mean to be made in God's image?

Are those of another race, another nationality, another religion, another political persuasion also made in God's image?

How should that impact the way we act toward and talk about those of another race, another nationality, another religion, another political persuasion?

Third: Know your Father's I _____.

There's an old song with these lyrics

*"I am loved, I am loved, I can risk loving you.
For the one who knows me best loves me most."*

(Answer the questions on the other side about this song.)

What does the second line in that song mean?

Why does the first line in the song talk about loving others as a “risk”?

How does the truth of the second line help me “risk” loving others?

Fourth: Experience your Father’s S_____.

Why do we need the help of the Holy Spirit to be able to love and serve everyone?

How has the Holy Spirit prompted you and empowered you to love someone who was hard to love?

Conclusion

Today we wrap up our study of six of Jesus’s toughest challenges. Which one was the hardest for you to hear:

- Week 1: “Don’t think it’s enough to simply avoid murder; *I don’t want you to even get angry.*” (verses 21-26)
- Week 2: “Don’t think it’s enough to simply avoid adultery; *I want you to deal with your fantasy life.*” (verses 27-30)
- Week 3: “Don’t think it’s enough to have a really good excuse for divorce; *I want your marriage to last a lifetime.*” (verses 31-32)
- Week 4: “Don’t think it’s enough to tell the truth when you’re under oath; *speak the truth all the time.*” (verses 33-37)
- Week 5: “Don’t think it’s enough to just not overdo it on retaliation; *always forgive.*” (verses 38-42)
- Today: “Don’t think it’s enough to just love the loveable; *love your enemies.*” (verses 43-47)

How does Matthew 5:48 make a perfect summary of these six challenges?



Close with praise reports and prayer requests