

Radical resistance & radical love

discussion guide

based on **Matthew 5.38-48** (Linked to sermon of 1/2/26)
www.stjamesbythepark.org/current-sermon-series

This was part of a series on the Sermon on the Mount

Intro: Mahatma Gandhi and Dr Martin Luther King Jr were both inspired to 'non-violent resistance' by this section of the Sermon on the Mount. What do you know about their stories and successes – and the opposition they faced?

Read Matthew 5.38-42

When is your desire for revenge strongest? Why?

Duncan explained that the phrase "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth" was designed to limit revenge, not encourage it! But Jesus takes it further and deeper by instructing no revenge. Duncan suggested that Jesus is being subversive: if his disciples follow Jesus' teaching, it puts the shame back on the 'evil' person (rather than the one who has been offended).

Can you collectively remember how this worked for the different examples Jesus gives?

What might be modern day equivalents?

Read Matthew 5.43-48

Can you share a story of someone who has "loved their enemy" and "prayed for those who persecute them"?

Who might be your 'enemy' at the moment? Or who do you 'other'?

That 'enemy' might well have done or said terrible things. But does your reaction to them reveal anything about your heart?

God's law said 'Love your neighbour' – it was the rabbis and others who added the bit about 'hate your enemy'.

In what way does loving our enemy and praying for those who persecute us help others see the family likeness to our Father in heaven?

What could it look like for you to love your enemy and pray for them at the moment?

Duncan made the excellent general point that Jesus' redefinition of sin in this chapter doesn't just make the commands harder to keep; it makes them impossible to keep. Jesus is pushing us to see that we can't keep the law by ourselves; we need his gracious forgiveness. So Jesus isn't encouraging us to try to be good enough; he's encouraging us to admit our need of him.

How do we balance that with Romans 6.1-4?

Personal reflection:

Head – what have you learned in this session that you need to ponder on more?

Heart – what has spoken to your heart in this session that you need to pray through more?

Hands – what actions do you need to take to put this into practice?

Is there anything from this reflection you want to share with your group (or one or two others in the group) so they can pray for you specifically, and encourage you in the days ahead?

Prayer suggestions:

Jesus has talked in this chapter about anger, lying, violence, lust, revenge etc. We all struggle with those things! Pray for God's forgiveness.

Pray too that God would 'take away our love of sinning' – ie that he would so transform our hearts with his love that we don't *want* to get angry, lie, take revenge etc.

Someone had a picture whilst praying for our church that we should be a loudspeaker for love: not broadcasting words, but love. Pray that God changes our hearts so that we broadcast love loud and clear to our community!