

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

WORSHIP

Read Psalm 104, a prayer praising God for His goodness to all creation, even the rebellious creatures.

FELLOWSHIP

What's the best book you have read or movie you have seen this year?

DISCUSSION

1. 1. Mike has mentioned that the Sermon on the Mount "is the best sermon ever given by the best man who ever lived." It never ceases to provoke fresh insights and applications for our lives. How has our time reading and reflecting on this sermon so far impacted you?

Read Matthew 5:43-48

2. What are your first impressions of this passage?

3. What is the justification given for Jesus' command in v.44? Why is that significant?

4. Have you ever encountered someone who displayed love for their enemy, how did it affect you?

5. In his sermon, Mike paraphrased verse 47: "And if you greet only your own people – your own tribe, those who look like you, think like you, vote like you, have the same sources of news - what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?" What does it look like to love our neighbors, even our enemies, is this polarized climate?

6. How does God show His love for enemies in this passage? Can you think of any other ways He has done so? (Consider flipping to Romans 5:8)

PRAYER

If you think this exercise will be helpful, consider asking people in your group to think of someone in their life that they are having a difficult time loving. Ask them to keep this person anonymous.

Then, brainstorm ways for that person to love his or her enemy. After that, you may pray this prayer:

"Heavenly Father, Help us to love not only those who love us first, but also those who treat us badly. Jesus expressed his love by dying for us precisely at a time when we were rebelling against his authority. Help us to do the same sort of thing whenever we are presented with the chance.

When we are disrespected, help us to respond with respect. When we are ignored, help us to think of the needs of others and pay attention to them. When we are hurt, help us to respond with healing love and in so doing, become more like Jesus our Lord. In saying all of this, we know that this love does not come naturally to us, but we know that it can arise as the result of you working supernaturally within our hearts. We need your Holy Spirit to work within us to produce this spiritual fruit.

Father, may self-giving love be a mark of who we are as your children and as followers of Jesus Christ. It is in his name that we pray.

Amen."

