



Loving Jesus, Loving People, Plowing a Counter-Culture

SERMON TEXT: Matthew 5:33-48

KEY POINT(S): Our views of marriage should reflect those of God as the Creator and Designer for marriage.

FOR LEADERS

- *Apprenticeship! As always, our hope is that every leader of Emergence would be investing in the leadership potential of those whom God has placed around them! As a leader, who is that person for you, and what does a next step for them look like? If you're looking for more insight or suggestion on how to help your people grow in their own walk, reach out to your Coach or shoot us an e-mail at Communities@emergencenj.org!*

GETTING STARTED

[1] Icebreaker – “What is the most generous thing that has ever been done for you?”

[2] Communities Video - Watch this week’s Communities video!

[3] What were some things that stood out to you from the sermon this week? Was there anything you found particularly impactful or eye-opening?

LET YOUR YES BE YES

Ask a Volunteer to read Matthew 5:33-37

In our passage this week we see Jesus address the issue of “making oaths.” His point is not that oaths themselves are evil, but that they are unnecessary for those who are honest and add nothing to the trustworthiness of a person who is truly sincere.

[1] In your opinion, how trustworthy are people today? Do you think it is more common for people to be honest or dishonest, and where do you see examples of this today?

[2] In what way does Jesus call his disciples to a higher understanding of honesty? How does this compare to what we most often experience in our day to day lives?

[3] In your own life, do you encounter pressure to be dishonest? If so, where, and how do you handle it?

Leaders: As Jesus’ followers, our “word” should be like God’s Word—true, dependable, honest, loving. Anything other than this misses the heart of Christ. Some places where this may be common, even among Christians, is the age old “Oh that’s terrible, I’ll be praying for you” sentiment. When we say we’ll pray for someone, our Word should be our bond. Imagine if Jesus’ word was as good and true as yours...what would be the result? The way in which we make promises, or speak in any manner, really, declares to everyone around us the validity and faithfulness of the God in whom we believe.

OUR RESPONSES

Ask a Volunteer to read Matthew 5:38-42

In the sermon this week, Ryan noted the important balance that Christians should have between enduring their own retreatment and preventing the mistreatment of others. As an example, he gave the obligation that we have to protect our own families, and then went on to explain that, of all the things Jesus mentions in Matthew 5, the subject of “turning the other cheek” seems to be the hardest for our culture to digest.



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- [4]** In your own opinion, why do you think Jesus’ instructions here are so difficult for people today? Have you ever struggled with this personally? How so?
- [5]** What are some reasons for why people might think that retaliation is a good thing? How does Jesus challenge these views?
- [6]** It is not uncommon today for people to avoid being charitable for fear of being “taken advantage of.” Have you ever experienced this yourself? How does Jesus address this in our passage this week, and what should that mean for us?

Leaders: In our passage this week, Jesus is being pretty clear about how we should think of being taken advantage of, and He says “Don’t worry about it.” Whether or not someone chooses to use our generosity for their betterment or for further disparity is their prerogative...we’re simply called to be generous. Does that mean we should help people go further into sin, addiction or depravity? By no means...but there are certainly still ways to love people well.

OUR RELATIONSHIPS

Ask a Volunteer to read Matthew 5:43-44

- [7]** In what way does showing love to an enemy communicate the love of Christ? Where have you seen examples of this in your own experience?
- [8]** Do you think that “loving your enemy” is counter-cultural today? Why or why not?
- [9]** Who is our enemy today? Who is YOUR enemy? What steps can we take, practically, to better love our enemies?
- [10]** Name a time where you showed love to an enemy. What were the results?
- [11]** Who is someone that you know who does this well and what have you learned from them?

Ask a Volunteer to read Romans 12:17-21

- [12]** How does this passage further encourage us to obey Christ in our lives?

Leaders: In terms of retaliation, it’s much the same as the fear of being taken advantage of – what are you most concerned with... being taken advantage of, or loving someone who’s desperately far from Christ? If Jesus took retaliation on us for generations worth of sin. Jesus was the first to turn the other cheek, and He turned it toward us, who spit on Him and beat Him and tortured Him to death. And yet, He extends a hand of forgiveness, of grace, of mercy and freedom and life. Who are you to do otherwise?

PRAYER

- [1]** Pray that God would help us to be honest in ways which we are not being completely honest or truthful. Pray also that God would make us a people who love our enemies, and who are generous to anyone and everyone.
- [2]** Pray that as Jesus’ Church, we would be a people marked by love, grace, forgiveness and truth, rather than a people who never lose an argument.