



Let's not forget what Jesus told his disciples in Matthew 5:20.

For I tell you, unless \_\_\_\_\_ righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never \_\_\_\_\_ the kingdom of heaven.

Some of the religious leaders and influencers of Jesus' day had developed a culture that emphasized the "right" outward behavior (in their own eyes) while neglecting what was really going on in their hearts (an absolute key to having an authentic relationship with God). But in clear terms, Jesus points his followers to a better standard—the heart of our Father in heaven. How should citizens of the kingdom of heaven react when the going's getting tough and we aren't getting our way?

"You have heard that it was said, 'An \_\_\_\_\_ for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not \_\_\_\_\_ the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone \_\_\_\_\_ you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you." (5:38-42)

That gets our attention very quickly, doesn't it? Especially in a culture where we hear a lot about our own rights and very easily focus on what we feel we deserve. But Jesus is getting the focus of his disciples off of themselves and onto the goal of imitating God. Listen...

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and \_\_\_\_\_ your enemy.' But I say to you, \_\_\_\_\_ your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be \_\_\_\_\_, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (5:43-48)

What's the standard for disciples of Jesus? Not other religious people. Not those who love us. Not the world around us. Our standard is our Father in heaven and his love is "perfect." He loves all, even his enemies. "Perfect" or "complete" love seeks the best and does the best for others. That gives us a whole lot to talk about, doesn't it? Let's dig in...



# For Class & Family Discussion:

1. Why would the LORD have given the children of Israel “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” sort of law (Exo 21:22-25; Lev 24:17-20) in the first place?
2. Why then would Jesus speak up here with, “But I say to you...”?
3. What should we make of the examples Jesus gives for his disciples in 5:39-42?
4. In the “real” world, why would anyone choose to live like that?
5. What about Jesus’ “you have heard” statement in 5:43? Had the LORD ever told his people, “You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy”? If not, what’s going on here?
6. What does Jesus highlight about our Father in heaven in 5:45? What point is he making?
7. In the “real” world, why would anyone choose to love their enemies and pray for those who were persecuting them?
8. In what ways is this a “perfect” sort of love?