
MESSAGE SUMMARY

Jesus calls you to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, which means your relationships should look different from the world around you. The law established what was fair, but Jesus calls you to go beyond fairness and respond with love. The world naturally loves people it values, but Jesus calls you to love even your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. This kind of love reflects the generous character of your heavenly Father. Following Jesus is not about finding the minimum requirement; it is about allowing God to transform your heart so that you increasingly love as He loves.

MAIN POINTS

- 1. The Law says, “Be Fair.”** Grace says, “Go beyond fairness to love.” (Matthew 5:38–42; Matthew 22:37–40) The Law established justice: “Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.” Jesus calls you beyond simply demanding what is fair. Instead of asking, “What do I have the right to do?” ask, “What does love require me to do?” Love may require you to surrender your right to get even, prove yourself right, or demand what you deserve. You show the heart of Christ when you seek the good of others, even when they have wronged you. Heart Transformation: You move from “What do I deserve?” to “How can I love?”
- 2. The Law says, “Only love what you value.”** Grace says, “Love even those who don’t value you.” (Matthew 5:43–45; Matthew 5:46–47) The world naturally loves people who love, appreciate, and value them. Jesus calls you to love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. God gives sunshine and rain to both the righteous and unrighteous. As salt and light, you should respond differently from the world. Your love is not based only on how someone treats you; it flows from the grace God has already shown you. Heart Transformation: You move from “They don’t deserve my love” to “How can I reflect God’s love toward them?”
- 3. Love calls you to become more like Jesus.** (Matthew 5:48; Matthew 5:13–16; 1 John 4:19) Jesus says, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” Christian love should look different from ordinary human love. You cannot transform your heart through willpower alone. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to change your heart and empower you to love. As you become more like Jesus, your words, attitudes, and relationships should increasingly reflect His character. Heart Transformation: Instead of simply trying to do the right thing, you allow God to change your heart so that loving others becomes an increasingly natural response to His love for you. This is the work of the Holy Spirit...continue to trust in Him to do this work in you and through you!

Big Idea: When it comes to relationships, stop asking, “Where’s the line?” and start asking, “What does love require?”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. Why does Jesus call you to go beyond fairness in Matthew 5:38–42?** *Possible Answer:* Justice matters, but Jesus calls His followers beyond simply demanding what is fair. Because we have received grace from God, we can surrender our right to retaliate and choose a loving response instead. (Matthew 5:38–42; Romans 12:17–21)
- 2. Why does Jesus command you to love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you?** *Possible Answer:* Because God’s love is not limited to people who deserve it or love Him in return. Loving difficult people reflects the character of our heavenly Father and demonstrates that our lives are different because of Christ. (Matthew 5:44–45; Luke 6:27–28)
- 3. When someone treats you unfairly, what do you naturally want to do? How would your response change if you asked, “What does love require?”** *Possible Answer:* I may want to defend myself, get even, or make sure the other person knows they were wrong. Jesus challenges me to surrender my desire for retaliation and consider how I can respond in a way that honors Him. (Matthew 5:38–42; Philippians 2:3–5)
- 4. Who is difficult for you to love right now? What would it look like to love that person without expecting anything in return?** *Possible Answer:* I can begin by praying for that person, refusing to speak negatively about him/her, forgiving him/her, and looking for an appropriate way to show Christlike kindness. (Matthew 5:44; Romans 12:14, 20–21)

GOSPEL CONNECTION

You cannot love God or others perfectly, and your sin separates you from a holy God. Jesus perfectly fulfilled God’s law, died for your sins, and rose again so that you can be forgiven and made new through faith in Him. If you have never trusted Christ, repent of your sin and believe in Jesus, receiving His grace and surrendering your life to Him. If you already follow Christ, continually repent of selfishness and ask God to transform your heart so that you increasingly love others as Christ has loved you.

DAILY DEVOTIONS

MONDAY — MORE THAN FAIR

Key Verse: “But I tell you, do not resist an evil person.” (Matthew 5:39)

Reflection: It is natural to want people to treat you fairly, especially when you have been hurt or wronged. Jesus calls you beyond simply asking what is fair and challenges you to ask, “What does love require?” Following Jesus means you may choose grace when you have the right to demand fairness.

Application Question: When you are treated unfairly, how can you respond with love instead of trying to get even? *Possible Answer:* I can slow down, pray, and choose a response that seeks the other person's good rather than trying to make them pay for what they did. (Matthew 5:38–42; Romans 12:17–21)

Prayer Response: Lord, help me surrender my desire to get even when I am treated unfairly. Give me the wisdom and strength to respond with grace and love, just as You have shown grace and love to me. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

TUESDAY — LOVE THE UNLOVABLE

Key Verse: “But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” (Matthew 5:44)

Reflection: It is easy to love people who love you, appreciate you, and treat you well. Jesus calls you to something deeper: loving even those who oppose you or make relationships difficult. This kind of love does not mean approving of wrong behavior; it means choosing to seek another person's good and bringing that person before God in prayer.

Application Question: Who is one difficult person you can begin praying for today? *Possible Answer:* I can pray that God will work in that person's life, give me compassion toward them, and help me respond to them with patience and grace. (Matthew 5:44–45; Romans 12:14)

Prayer Response: Father, You have shown kindness and grace to me even when I did not deserve it. Help me love difficult people and pray for those who have hurt or opposed me. Change my heart so that I reflect Your grace. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

WEDNESDAY — BECOMING LIKE JESUS

Key Verse: “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matthew 5:48)

Reflection: Jesus is not calling you to earn salvation by becoming flawless through your own effort. He is calling you to grow toward spiritual maturity and to increasingly reflect the character of your heavenly Father. As God transforms your heart, your relationships should increasingly look like the love, grace, patience, and forgiveness you have received from Him.

Application Question: What attitude or behavior in your relationships needs to become more like Jesus? *Possible Answer:* I need to become more patient and less defensive when someone disagrees with me, choosing to listen and respond with grace instead of immediately trying to prove myself right. (Matthew 5:48; Philippians 2:3–5; 1 John 4:19)

Prayer Response: Lord Jesus, I know I cannot transform myself by my own strength. Change my heart and make me more like You so that my words, attitudes, and relationships reflect Your character. In Your Name, Amen.

THURSDAY — BE SALT AND LIGHT

Key Verse: “You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world.” (Matthew 5:13–14)

Reflection: Jesus does not call you to hide from the world but to live differently within it. Your relationships are one of the clearest places where people can see whether your faith is making a difference. When you respond with forgiveness, generosity, patience, and love, your life can point people toward your heavenly Father.

Application Question: What is one relationship where you can intentionally let your light shine this week? *Possible Answer:* I can encourage someone who is struggling, forgive someone who has hurt me, or serve someone without expecting anything in return. (Matthew 5:13–16; Colossians 3:12–14)

Prayer Response: Father, help me live as salt and light wherever You have placed me. Let the way I treat people point them toward You rather than toward myself. Use my relationships to show others what Your love looks like. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

FRIDAY — WHAT DOES LOVE REQUIRE?

Key Verse: “We love because he first loved us.” (1 John 4:19)

Reflection: The question Jesus wants you to ask is not simply, “Where is the line?” but “What does love require?” When you focus only on the minimum standard, you may miss opportunities to show Christ's love through forgiveness, sacrifice, generosity, patience, and grace. Because God loved you first and gave His Son for you, you can now love others from a heart that has been changed by the gospel.

Application Question: Where is God asking you to stop looking for the minimum and start looking for an opportunity to love? *Possible Answer:* I need to stop focusing on what another person deserves from me and start looking for one practical way I can demonstrate Christ's love toward them. (Matthew 22:37–40; 1 John 4:19; 1 Corinthians 13:4–7)

Prayer Response: Father, help me stop asking where the line is and start asking what love requires, especially in the relationships that are difficult for me. Transform my heart so that I love others more like Jesus. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Sources: D. A. Carson, *The Sermon on the Mount*, Baker Academic; *ESV Study Bible*, Crossway; D.A. Carson, *The Expositor's bible Commentary: Matthew*, Zondervan