

The Sermon Connection

Connecting Sunday's Teaching to Everyday Living

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The Sermon Connection is a weekly handout to help you apply Sunday's sermon content to your everyday life. It is designed to give you additional insights and practical tools for applying the teaching throughout the week.

The application, reflection and connection questions may also serve as a springboard for discussion in your small group, your family time, or in one-on-one conversations.

Hard Saying of Jesus "Doing the Impossible" (Matthew 5:43-48)

Trent Thomas
October 14, 2018

Pastor Trent continued our series on "Hard Sayings of Jesus" with a message titled "Doing the Impossible." He pointed out that the world in which we live is filled with attention-getting entertainment, advertisements, and creature comforts. In spite of that, one of the virtues of the Christian faith that still grabs headlines and commands unbeliever's attention is love. When love is given without reciprocity, in the face of opposition to recipients who don't deserve it, the world is captivated. Jesus commands His followers to love our enemies. Our obedience to this command can have transformational results on the recipients or not, but we're still to do it. Why? Because Jesus loved us when we were His enemies.

In his message, Trent asked 4 questions of the passage. The first was "What's being asked of us?" The answer here is obvious – Jesus is asking (commanding actually) us to love our enemies AND to pray for those who persecute us. Talk about a hard saying! We live in a society that has factions that are diametrically opposed to each other. Those factions try to shout the other side down and the idea of loving and praying for the "other side" is totally foreign. This is true even among believers. What would it look like if everyone who claims to be a follower of Jesus took this command at face value and really did it? You would probably see relationships transformed.

The next question Trent asked was "Why is it being asked of us?" Jesus' answer is compelling: "that you may be children of your Father in heaven." Jesus goes on to say that the sun rises on both the good and the evil – and that God sends rain on the righteous and unrighteous. In other words, we all live in the same world. What distinguishes us as followers of Jesus is that we are the ones who love our enemies. That proves that we are God's children.

The third question was "Who is the object of our obedience?" In vv. 46-47 Jesus gets very practical. He says that even tax collectors love those who love them. He goes on to say that even the pagans greet their own people. If we follow that same pattern, there is no difference – there is nothing that shows that we have been transformed by God's love and grace in our own lives. On the other hand, if the object of our obedience is Jesus, we will obey His commands. As we obey His commands, we show the world that the Spirit of God is real and can empower us to live radically different lives.

Finally, Trent asked "How do we do it?" Realistically, we can't. But the power of God in us can. Trent gave seven practical steps to love our enemies. They are listed on the back of this paper along with the references that he used for each one. As believers, we CAN do the impossible and as we do it, we can show the world that Jesus Christ is real.

READING AND REFLECTION:

Read Matthew 5:43-48, Luke 6:27-36, Romans 12:14-21, Ephesians 5:1-2

How do these passages say that we should treat our enemies inside and outside the church?

What is our motivation to do so according to the passages above?

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

Look up the scriptures that Pastor Trent used for the practical ways to love your enemies below.

- 1) Ask God for a new heart toward them -- Psalm 51:10

- 2) Pray for them -- Matthew 5:44

- 3) Humanize them, don't demonize them -- Genesis 1:26

- 4) Expect nothing in return from them -- Romans 5:8

- 5) Forgive them -- Matthew 6:14-15

- 6) Talk to them (ask questions) -- Proverbs 20:5

- 7) Listen to them -- James 1:19-20

COMMUNITY CONNECTION:

In your family or small group this week, discuss Jesus' command to love your enemy and to pray for those who persecute you. Have you ever done this? What was the result? Have you ever disobeyed this command? What was the result?

KEY POINT:

Loving your enemies is part of God's Kingdom life requirements for believers. Pastor Trent gave us 7 practical ways to do it in his message titled, "Doing the Impossible".

RESOURCES:

[One-Year New Testament Bible](#) (Available at the Information Table on Sunday mornings)

Become a part of one or more of the various Bible studies and small groups at Destiny Church.

Love Your Enemies by John Piper (free download at <https://www.desiringgod.org/books/love-your-enemies>)