

10.20.13 Small Group Questions, Bethany von Steinbergs teaching
What If...*We Love Our Enemies?*
Luke 6:27-36

Getting Started:

Who would you consider an enemy? Can you even admit that that you have enemies?

Do you have people that you are indifferent to? Is indifference really any better than treating someone like an enemy?

Would anyone consider you their enemy? How do you treat them?

Looking Back

Most people agree with the golden rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do to you."

Bethany's dad's egg word picture for the Trinity: God is the shell, Jesus the white, and Holy Spirit the yolk.

Some see God as the judge who carries out punishment while Jesus is the loving 70's--all is good, grace and love.

Jeremiah 29:1-7 (take time to read the passage) It gives us insight into God.

Background:

Ten Tribes of the north split from God and from tribes of the south. Eventually even the southern tribes strayed from God. In Jeremiah 29 they are captives in Babylon, an unclean heathen nation. They are in a tough time—away from family, 500 miles from Jerusalem. Probably difficult to accept their new surroundings.

God, through Jeremiah, addresses the people who have false hope:

1. "Settle in people." because God has brought you here: have children and grandchildren. OBEY God!
 - a. Make yourself at home, you'll be here for awhile contrary to some false prophets who said you would be here only 2 years.
 - b. Through his people in captivity God will work out his salvation.
2. v7: Seek first the peace and prosperity of these people. Tough when you are in captivity

Two possible responses to instructions:

1. Be troublemakers--With draw and trash talk, buck the system, put down
2. Be peacemaker--pray for them

If you were in the same situation, what would your reaction be? Explain

Since beginning of time God has been a "love your enemies" kind of God.

How does this make you feel? How hard is it for you to love your enemies?

Jesus is now carrying on the teaching of loving our enemies.

Sets of condition listed in Luke 6 lead to legalism, but God is wanting to point us in a missional direction: live radically. Missional direction is an attitude of the heart--an inner disposition, not legalism.

1 Peter 2:21-23 no retaliation or threats, God will judge them. We must trust God to judge fairly.

How trusting are you of God? How easy is it for you trust God when it comes to an enemy? Explain your answer.

Jesus is giving us directional living--a set of directions for discipleship--missional living.

SO: Accept and settle in where you are.

What feelings arise in you when we say terrorist, sexual predator, drug addict, ex spouse?

We can have passive hate: irreconcilable hostility--arms folded with a negative disposition. That is an enemy to us!

He calls us to unfold our arms and live the kingdom now:

1. Love our enemies
2. Do good--speak well of them' honor them
3. Bless--give praise to them, to cause them to prosper, (hard to do it with arms folded)
4. Pray for--exactly what it says: pray!

Of the four, which is the hardest for you? Why?

It takes faith to to love our enemies, to live the kingdom now by loving our enemies! Live counter-culturally!

v31 "Do to others as you would have them do to you."

1. It assumes we want the best for ourselves so we can want the best for them. He's asking for counter-culturally living! EX: v36 Live being merciful.
2. Hard times are the result of loving our enemies: we salt and light. Some people will become salt in our wounds. Phil 1:29; (to suffer for him) 2 Timothy 2 :12 (everyone will be persecuted)

Thinking back to your interactions with people that you don't like, what is your response? indifference? or, love?

Jesus doesn't ask us to avoid our enemies but to love them.

Loving our enemies requires us to push in to those we want to avoid.

Why do you think God asks us to love our enemies?

Why isn't leaving them alone or not hating them enough?

BETHANY: Love is not a sentiment it is an active pursuit of my enemies good which flows from the heart.

How is this a radical change in thinking for you?

Do you have a story to tell of how actively pursuing an enemy paid off?

Bethany this past week struggled to love the one that she loves--Jed: (unspoken expectations, critical responses, etc. marked the week.) She needed a Holy Spirit download. It came from Jed: "Loving you is the enemy of selfishness." We are best friends of selfishness. We are at odds with, or enemies of selflessness.

To choose to love your enemy is saying no to self and yes to God and kingdom living v35 While we were still sinners (enemies of God) he died for us.

Martha Mullen, lady in Virginia, sitting in a Starbucks--she heard they needed a place to bury Boston terrorist bomber, Tamerlan Tsarnaev. She had epiphany--someone needed to bury this person and she was the one. "God was the judge [of the terrorist]." Even

Christians wanted him to be buried in Mass. not Virginia. She was operating in kingdom living. Some have seen and been impacted for the good of the kingdom by her actions.

Who benefits when we love our enemies?

What is the impact on our enemies when we love them?

What is the impact on ourselves when we love our enemies?

Moving Forward:

This commitment to love our enemies is a radical shift but isn't that what Jesus did for us? Our refusal to love our enemies is our refusal to love those whom Jesus loves.

What changes would loving our enemies require in our life?

Make a commitment to push into your enemies with love.

What are other ways we can pray for you this week?