

## Centripetal Faith: Part 6—The Way of Jesus

Text: Matthew 5:38-48

### Warming Up

#### Questions:

1. *What is your favorite part of the Virginia Mennonite Relief Sale?*
2. *What do you find one of the most difficult teachings of Jesus?*

### Digging In

Read **Matthew 5:38-42**.

The word for “resist” here is *antistenai*, which literally means to “stand against”. But in Jesus’ day it was used of *violently* standing against. When scholars translated the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, *antistenai* is what they used of armies coming against each other. Jesus isn’t telling us *not* to resist, but instead to not *violently* resist. Turning the other cheek, giving up your coat, going the second mile were ways Jesus invited his disciples to resist *nonviolently*.

#### Questions:

1. *Why do you think Jesus invited his disciples to be nonviolent?*
2. *Why do you think Jesus encouraged his disciples to resist (even if it was nonviolently)?*
3. *How did Jesus model both nonviolence and resistance in his life?*

Read **Leviticus 19:18**.

Here is the passage that Jesus quotes in Matthew 5:42. Notice, in Leviticus, who the neighbor *is*: a fellow Israelite, believer, blood brother (or sister).

Read **Deuteronomy 11:13-17**.

Notice who gets rain and who doesn’t get rain in the Torah: those who are obedient, who follow the commandments, who are *righteous* get rain so their crops can grow and come it. Those who are not obedient, who are *unrighteous* don’t get rain: no crops, no blessing, no *love*.

With these two passages in mind, listen to the teaching of Jesus: Read **Matthew 5:43-48**.

#### Questions:

1. *In what ways in particular is Jesus challenging the message of the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament)?*
2. *Thinking back to the story of the Good Samaritan, who does Jesus say is our neighbor?*
3. *Why do you think Jesus is going out of his way to reframe these Old Testament texts?*
4. *How is the Jesus way different from the American way when it comes to our neighbors and our adversaries?*

### Sending Out

Read **Luke 6:27-36**.

#### Questions:

1. *In what ways has Luke added to or further explained the teaching of Jesus recorded in Matthew 5?*
2. *What about Luke’s version is more challenging or difficult?*
3. *What word does Luke use in place of “perfect” from Matthew’s Gospel account?*
4. *How does that change your understanding of what perfection Jesus is inviting us to strive for?*
5. *To whom do you think the church needs to extend more mercy, love, or blessing?*
6. *To whom **in your life** do you need to extend more mercy, love, or blessing?*

### Closing

Take a moment in silence to come before God and ask the question, “*What word or phrase or idea or moment does God want me to remember from this morning and carry with me this week?*”

Close with prayer.