

# GROWING IN FAITH



## Matthew 5:46

For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

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## STARTING OUT

Begin with a prayer. You can offer your own prayer or use the one below. Dear God, Thank you for the gift of today and for the opportunity to join together to grow in our faith and find community. As we explore deeper questions of our faith, guide us by your Holy Spirit to new revelations of your love for us. Teach us how we are to love others as you first loved us. Amen.

If your group is new, begin with simple introductions or an icebreaker game.

Read the scripture verse for the day - Matthew 5:43-48.

## PLAY THE VIDEO

## GOING DEEPER

In the video, Josh talked about how many questions Jesus asked those around him in the four gospels.

If Jesus, had all the answers, why did he not give them? Why did Jesus often answer questions with more questions of his own?

In both Matthew 5:46 and Luke 6:32, Jesus uses financial terms like "reward" and "credit" to make his point about love.

Does God love us in order to get something in return? If yes, what do you think God gets in return? If no, then why does God love us?

Can it truly be love if the motivations are for selfish gain? What should be our motivation to love?

Josh talked about perfection translated as "wholeness". John Wesley talked about perfection as all of our intentions being based out of love for God and love for our neighbor.

By that definition of perfection, is it possible for us to achieve perfection? What would it take to get there?

How would your interactions with others change on a daily basis if you believed their intentions were based out of a love for God and love for neighbor, even if their actions may not reflect that?

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## GOING DEEPER

Read Luke 10:25-37 together.

If you were going to place this story in a modern context, who would be the Jew and who would be the Samaritan? Who would be the Priest and the Levite? Imagine if this story were about an Israeli Jew and a Palestinian Muslim today. Or, imagine it is about a Democrat and a Republican. Or, imagine it is about an Oklahoma Sooner and an Oklahoma State Cowboy.

How would reading the story like this affect the way you understand it? What kind of barriers often prevent us from loving those who are supposed to be our enemies? What steps can we take to overcome those barriers?

In the story of the Good Samaritan, Josh mentioned that the Priest and the Levite probably had legitimate reasons for not stopping - cleanliness, purification laws, busy schedule, etc.

What types of reasons do we sometimes give for not stopping to show love and compassion to those in need?

Even if our reasons are legitimate, what does this parable tell us about how we should respond? How do we maintain balance between showing love to those in need while also fulfilling current responsibilities to family, work, friends, and others?

Josh mentioned that the Good Samaritan choosing to stop and show love probably cost him social standing, dignity, time, and financial resources.

Which of these are most difficult for you to sacrifice? Why?

"Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as you ever can." - John Wesley

## Closing

Take time to lift up joys and concerns in your group before closing in prayer. You can offer your own prayer or use the one below.

God of love, we are humbled when we consider the great ways you love us selflessly. Out of gratitude for your love, help us to show love even to our enemies expecting nothing in return. Teach us what it means to sacrifice for others and send us out to bring hope to others. Amen.