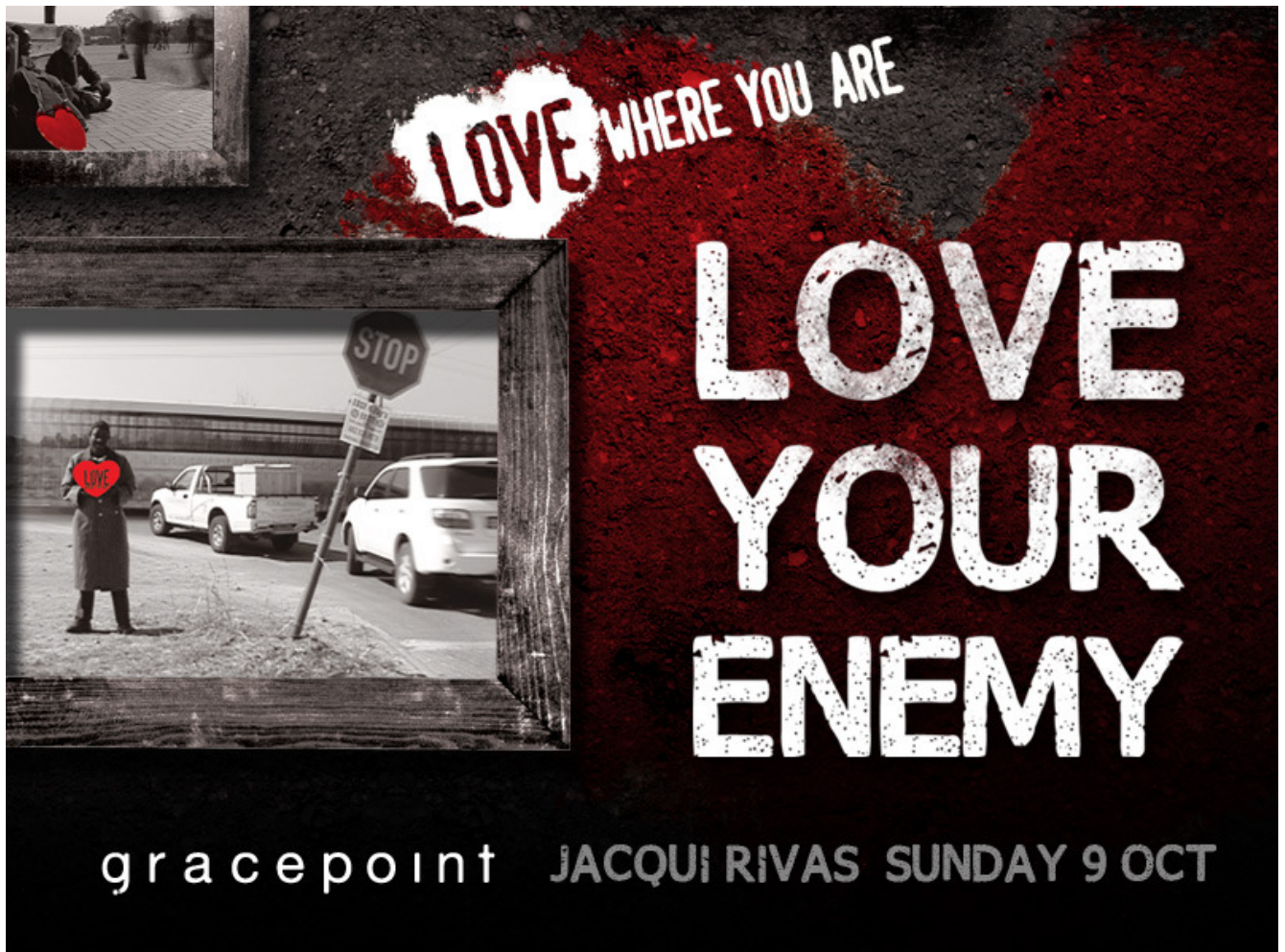


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A M E T H O D I S T C H U R C H

Homegroup material



LOVE WHERE YOU ARE

LOVE YOUR ENEMY

gracepoint JACQUI RIVAS SUNDAY 9 OCT

I. Introductory Discussion Questions

1. What stood out for you most about the “Love Your Enemy” sermon?
2. Read Matthew 5:43-48 and Luke 6:27 below. What stands out for you most about Jesus’ teaching in these passages?

- **Matthew 5 vs 43-48:**

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

Luke 6 vs 27-36:

“But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you. “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”

3. In a sense, these passages are a very concentrated definition of Christian ethics. Do you feel like most of the Christians you know live up to them?

II. The Big Shift

1. In the Old Testament Law it was taught that you had to love your neighbour and that you should try not to hold a grudge. (Leviticus 19:18). Vengeance was permitted under certain circumstances, but in the above teachings of Jesus, He introduces a big shift.

He teaches that we have to LOVE our enemies. Why do you think this shift came about?

2. The word Jesus used when speaking about loving our enemies is “agape”, which refers to unconditional, unconquerable and irrevocable love or benevolence. It is the kind of love God has towards us. Do you think it is possible to love our enemies this way? Why or why not?
3. It is impossible to love our enemies in our own strength. We need to love them with God’s love. How do you think we can go about cultivating His love for others?
4. Why do you think it is so important to God that we love others – even our enemies?
5. Matthew 5 vs 48 says: “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” What do you think this means?
6. The love to which God calls us is an extremely uncomfortable kind of love – the kind of love that He has for us. Read Romans 5 vs 8 and 10 below. What does it reveal to you about why God wants us to love our enemies?

- **Romans 5 vs 8 & 10 (Amplified):**

“But God shows and clearly proves His love for us by the fact that while we were still sinners, Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One) died for us... For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, it is much more [certain], now that we are reconciled that we shall be saved (daily delivered from sin’s domination) through His [resurrection] life.”

7. How do you think loving our enemies makes us more like God?
8. Do you think the command to love our enemies is more for the sake or benefit of our enemies or for us? Why?
9. Read and discuss the following Scriptures. What holds us back from forgiving?

- **Luke 6 vs 37-42:**

“Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” He also told them this parable: “Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into a pit? The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher. “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother,

let me take the speck out of your eye,' when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

- **Matthew 6 vs 14-15:**

"If you forgive others the wrongs they have done to you, your Father in heaven will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive the wrongs you have done."

10. Why do you think God can't forgive us unless we forgive others?

iii. Define my enemy

1. Who are your enemies right now? If you are willing, share this with the group.
2. Are you an enemy to anyone?
3. It is very uncomfortable for us, but the truth is that Jesus is not interested in and doesn't speak to the motivation of our enemies or the specific acts they performed against us. He only speaks to what our response should be to them: that we should do good to them, bless them and pray for them. How does this sit with you and why?
4. Read Romans 12 vs 18-21 below. Why do you think God does not want us to take vengeance ourselves, but promises to deal with it for us?

- **Romans 12 vs 18-21:**

"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord. On the contrary: 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

5. Often we are afraid to forgive or to let things go because then we feel like injustice will prevail or those who have hurt and injured us won't be held accountable or get what they deserve. Does it change your perception at all to realise that God says that vengeance is His and that He will deal with transgressors?

6. Martin Luther King Jr. once wrote: "*Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.*" What does this quote reveal to you about loving our enemies?

IV. It's in our attitude

1. What is one thing you can do practically to cultivate love for your enemies or those who are difficult to love right now?
2. Do you think a Christian community can help us in terms of loving our enemies? How?
3. Luke 6 vs 36 says that if you love your enemies... "Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful." What do you think this means?

V. Call to action

1. What will we do with what we have discovered in this session?
2. How will we hold each other accountable to this?