

spiritual adult

DISCIPLE ME

TRACK 3: DEEPENING RELATIONSHIPS

LOVING DIFFICULT PEOPLE

ICEBREAKER: THE PET PEEVE OLYMPICS

What are some of the things that people do that irrationally annoy you - even though you know it really shouldn't? (For example: loud chewing, someone saying "literally" when it's not literal, people who text "K", or people who jump into a conversation they weren't a part of.)

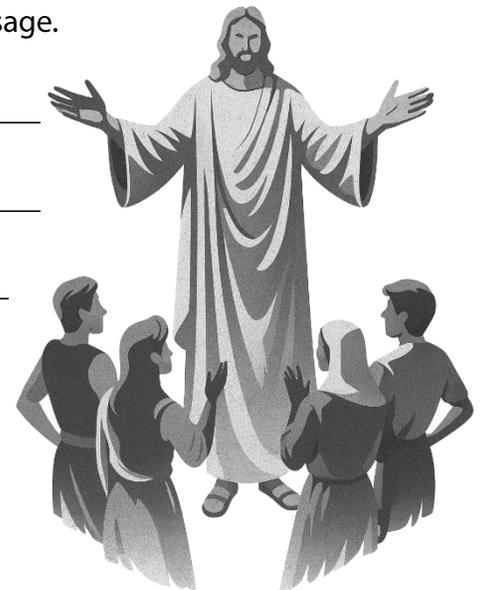
- **Why do you think small things can get such a big reaction out of us? What might that reveal about what's going on inside of us?**

STUDY: LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

Loving difficult people is not about *their* worthiness but about *our* discipleship. In the Spiritual Adult phase, we're learning to move from *reacting like everyone else* to *responding like Jesus*. Our goal is to move from being influenced by others' behavior to becoming an influence through Christ-shaped love.

READ Luke 6:27-36

- List some of the radical commands that Jesus mentions in this passage.



- What do you notice about Jesus' tone and expectations here?
- What stands out or feels most impossible? Why?
- What does Jesus imply here that shifts this from impossible to actually doable?

- Who in your life is a “difficult” person for you to love right now?
- When this person acts a certain way, how do you typically respond?
- What emotions usually come up in you when you’re around this person?

READ Luke 6:27-36 AGAIN ... this time picturing the person (or people) who is (are) difficult for you.

STUDY: A DIFFERENT WAY TO LOVE DIFFICULT PEOPLE

Difficult people reveal our maturity more than easy people ever could, which is why Spiritual Adults ask a deeper question: *“How can I represent Jesus here - especially when it’s hardest?”* Loving difficult people doesn’t mean liking them or enabling toxic behavior. It means choosing Christlike influence instead of being emotionally controlled by someone else’s actions. This is the heart behind Jesus’ commands to “turn the other cheek” and “go the extra mile.”

In Jesus’ culture, a backhanded slap was an insult meant to demean. Turning the other cheek wasn’t accepting abuse - it was a quiet act of dignity that prevented the aggressor from striking in the same humiliating way. It signaled, “I won’t play by the rules of shame.”

Similarly, Roman soldiers could legally force a Jewish civilian to carry their gear for one mile. But after that mile, the power shifted - the soldier had no authority. When Jesus said, “Go the extra mile,” He was teaching His followers to flip the script. By willingly continuing, the disciple acted from freedom rather than coercion, transforming an oppressive act into a voluntary one.

In both cases, Jesus wasn’t asking His followers to be passive victims; He was calling them to a different kind of strength - **the strength to stay rooted in God’s character rather than someone else’s behavior**. It’s the courage to show mercy where others expect retaliation and to choose influence over reaction. This unexpected, countercultural response disrupts the cycle of hostility and reflects the heart of the Father: a dignity shaped by His love, not someone else’s mistreatment.

CHALLENGE: RADICAL REACTION

This week, choose one difficult person in your life and take a few minutes to make two short lists:

- **List 1: How They Influence Me:** Identify your usual reactions when they frustrate you - getting defensive, shutting down, snapping back, or avoiding them.
- **List 2: How I Could Influence Them:** Write down ways you could respond if you let Jesus lead you - patience, kindness, blessing instead of reacting, a simple good deed, or praying for them.

Compare the lists, then choose **one small shift** you can make that would move you from *being influenced* to *becoming an influence*. Put that shift into action this week in one concrete, Christlike way - maybe offering a small kindness, speaking gently where you’d normally react, praying for them daily, or doing a quiet good without expecting anything back. Then text your discipleship group this week with any updates.