

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Lesson 1: Love Your Enemies

This includes:

1. Leader Preparation
2. Lesson Guide

1. LEADER PREPARATION

LESSON OVERVIEW

Jesus knows that we will face problems in some of our relationships. He also knows our tendency only to love our neighbor. Jesus takes the command to another level—we are to love our enemies in the same way we love our neighbors. Yet he doesn't simply command us to do more; he also shows us how we can live in this new commandment.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. WHAT: God gives us specific instructions for how to handle people who reject us, oppose us, hurt us, or ridicule us.
2. WHY: We will all face challenges, hurt, and discord in our relationships, but God calls us to love even the most seemingly unlovable people in our lives.
3. HOW: Students will be encouraged to practice praying for and blessing people who've wronged them.

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE

Matthew 5:43-48

SECONDARY SCRIPTURES

Romans 12:8

TEACHING PREP

The short overview below is designed to help you prepare for your lesson. While you may not want to convey this information word-for-word with your teenagers, you'll definitely want to refer to it as you lead.

Read Matthew 5:43-48 and Romans 12:9-21.

Jesus never excused us when we've been wronged. But we have a decision to make every time we are hurt and wronged. Our human tendency is to love people who love us and hate people who hurt us.



LEADER
TIP



Jesus said there's another way, and this way will show the world who he is because it is beyond our human ability. God has called us to conquer evil with good (Romans 12:21) and act as true children of heaven (Matthew 5:45).

Bring to mind someone who has wronged you. What did they do to you? How do you feel as you remember the situation? Your reaction will reveal how you have handled your "enemy." Your reaction actually reveals whether or not you have forgiven that person.

At some point during your lesson, consider taking a risk and briefly sharing about a relationship that has been hurtful to you and how you've handled it. You don't have to explain all the details; practice an appropriate level of vulnerability. Whether you handle it well or poorly, talk about what God taught you through that experience about loving your enemies.

NOTE: If you have students who are struggling to forgive someone who's hurt them, consider looking into additional resources. One helpful resource is Life Hurts God Heals, available from Group Publishing/Simply Youth Ministry. Neil Anderson also has a great forgiveness resource for students called Steps to Freedom in Christ.

THE BEFORE & AFTER [OPTIONAL]

Text Message Questions

We've provided a couple of different text message questions to send out to your students prior to your meeting. Feel free to use one or both of the questions below. As with the rest of the curriculum, edit these questions to fit the needs of your ministry

- What kind of things really upset and hurt you? God says we can forgive people who hurt us. Let's talk about that as a group tonight.
- What does it feel like to forgive someone who's hurt you? Get ready for some great conversation tonight.



Parent Email

We've provided you with an email below that you can send to your parents following the lesson. Our hope is to encourage parents to continue the conversation at home. Feel free to edit and customize the email to fit your ministry needs.

Dear parents,

We've started a four-lesson study on the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5–7. Jesus spoke these lessons to a bunch of people nearly 2,000 years ago, but the truths he spoke remain relevant and important to our lives today. Jesus delivered bold truth about how to engage these life issues, and he practically addressed how to handle them.

In our first lesson, we discussed Jesus' specific instruction in Matthew 5:43-48 on how to handle our enemies and those who've harmed us. Through this lesson our students learned that God gives us specific instructions for how to handle our enemies. We challenged our teenagers to practice praying for and blessing those who've wronged us.

As you go throughout the week, help reinforce this teaching in your teenager's life by asking the following questions as you have the opportunity:

- If you love an enemy, how might that impact your relationship with God?
- Which is harder: forgiving someone or asking someone to forgive you? Why?
- What act of kindness can you show this week to someone who might fit the category of an "enemy"?

As you walk with your child and pray for them this week, remember: Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other (Romans 12:10).

Prayers for your family this week!



SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Lesson 1:
Love Your Enemies

2. LESSON GUIDE

GETTING THINGS STARTED [OPTIONAL]

Welcome your students and invite them into your meeting area. Open in prayer, and then ASK:

- *Who's your favorite villain or bad guy from a movie, TV show, or book? Why do you like that character?*
- *If that character existed in real life, would you want to hang out with him or her? Why or why not?*
- *How are fictional villains similar to the "enemies" or "bad guys" in your life? Do reality and fiction have anything in common?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *This is a legit issue in our lives. We all have people and experiences that hurt us. But we have choices to make about how we handle those people when we've been hurt. Today we are going to take a look at what Jesus had to say about loving our enemies—and his words definitely go against the way most of us naturally want to react*

TEACHING POINTS



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TIP

The goal of the Teaching Points is to help students capture the essence of each lesson with more discussion and less lecture-style teaching. The main points we have chosen are (1) Jesus calls us to a life beyond our human capacity, (2) Prayer allows us to forgive people who've hurt us, (3) Blessing an enemy frees your heart to reflect God's heart, and (4) Sometimes reconciliation is beyond our control.



LEADER
TIP

Remember: All throughout these lessons, it's up to you to choose (1) how many questions you use, and (2) the wording of the main points—keep ours, or change the wording to make it clearer for your audience.

Read Matthew 5:43-48 together as a group. Consider dividing verses among your students so everyone has a chance to read.



SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Let's take some time to look closely at what Jesus is teaching us in these verses, plus some other important truths from Scripture.*

1. Jesus calls us to a life beyond our human capacity

ASK:

- *What are all the typical ways you might react to someone who hurts, betrays, rejects, or ridicules you—in other words, your “enemies”? Let's see how long of a list we can create.*
- *Who qualifies as your enemy?*
- *Is verse 44 the most difficult verse in the Bible to obey? Tell me what you think.*
- *How does Jesus' teaching in this passage contradict what our world teaches?*
- *Think of a time you were able to love someone who hurt you—how did you do it? What was that like?*
- *If you love an enemy, how might that impact your relationship with God?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Jesus knew what people had been taught before about enemies, and he wasn't satisfied with that life. Because he created our bodies, minds, and spirits, he knows that any kind of hate kills our souls. As his disciples he knows we have capacity to do more than what this world teaches, and love our enemies.*

2. Prayer allows us to forgive people who've hurt us

ASK:

- *What's the connection between prayer and forgiveness?*
- *How has prayer helped you to forgive someone who hurt you?*
- *How have you experienced forgiveness from someone that you hurt?*
- *Which is harder: forgiving someone or asking someone to forgive you? Why?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Prayer changes our hearts and our attitudes. When we pray for someone who's wronged us, we open ourselves up for God to change our hearts and we begin to see that person through God's eyes. Forgiveness through our own will is impossible.*



But when we forgive our enemy, we actually are freed from the pain that person has caused us. Only God can do that kind of work!

3. Blessing an enemy frees your heart to reflect God's heart

ASK:

- *Specifically, what do you think it means to bless an enemy?*
- *Why is blessing a key component to forgiveness and freedom?*
- *What does it mean to curse an enemy, and why does God not want us to do that?*
- *How is bitterness like a poison?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Blessing your enemy has a double spiritual impact. First, blessing that person is good for your soul. It empowers you to see that person through God's eyes and heal your own pain from the offense. Second, blessing an enemy pours blessings from God into that person's life, which enables him or her to live the life God desires. Cursing them will only put them deeper into their own sin and distance from God—and it can create bitterness in your own life.*

4. Sometimes reconciliation is beyond our control

ASK:

- *Read Romans 12:18. What does reconciliation mean and look like with someone who's hurt you?*
- *When does a situation become something beyond your control?*
- *Have you ever tried to reconcile with someone but it didn't happen or didn't work? What was that like?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *It's hard to bring reconciliation to a damaged relationship. It's easy to write the person off or make a weak attempt to make things right with that person. But God wants us to do everything we can to live at peace with everyone. That doesn't necessarily mean you have to become good friends again after you've reconciled—some friendships can't be rebuilt, and other friendships shouldn't be.*

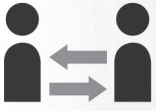


ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION [OPTIONAL]

Ask students to form groups of two or three for these questions.

ASK:

- *What helps you decide to bless and not curse someone who's hurt you?*
- *How can love, blessing, and prayer conquer evil in the world?*
- *How might other people be influenced if you forgave and loved an enemy?*



PAIR SHARE

Bring everyone back together, and ask for volunteers to share answers to the previous questions, as time permits.

APPLICATION

ASK:

- *If you need to pursue reconciliation and peace with someone, what specific steps can you take?*
- *Have you hurt someone and you've decided that you need to ask that person to forgive you? If so, how can you move forward with that decision?*
- *What act of kindness can you show this week to someone who might fit the category of an "enemy"?*
- *Is God asking you to do anything else to bring reconciliation and peace to a relationship? If so, what steps of obedience can you take this week?*



SUMMARY



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TIP

End your lesson here. Provide your teenagers with a quick summary or take-home challenge based on (1) the content of this lesson, (2) the dialogue that took place during the lesson, (3) your understanding of the issues and struggles your teenagers are facing, and (4) the big picture of your youth ministry and what your leadership team wants accomplished with the teaching and discussion time.



LEADER
TIP

FOR KEEPS [MEMORY VERSE]

Encourage and/or challenge your teenagers to memorize the verse below.

"But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you!" (Matthew 5:44).

