

**Group discussion** Each number below includes questions that relate to the scripture. I offer a few answers, but your perspective may be better. The point is to discuss, not to get 100% agreement. Rule of thumb: the fewer questions you ask, the better. Save time for “the big question.”

Read Matthew 5:43-48 aloud.

1. In verse 43, Jesus quotes a common saying of the day – “love your neighbor, hate your enemy.” Where do you find this saying in the Old Testament?  
*You don't! First phrase is in Leviticus 19:18, but not the 2<sup>nd</sup>.*

What is Jesus' instruction in contrast to the conventional wisdom?  
*Love your enemies. Pray for your persecutors.*

Read the following quotes from wisdomquotes.com. How well do these statements match up with Jesus' words?

- [Abraham Lincoln](#): Am I not destroying my enemies when I make friends of them?
- [Jewish proverb](#): Listen to your enemy, for God is talking.
- [John F. Kennedy](#): Forgive your enemies, but never forget their names.
- [Martin Luther King, Jr.](#): Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into friend.
- [Martin Luther King, Jr.](#): We will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.
- [Martin Luther King, Jr.](#): We must develop and maintain the capacity to forgive. He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love. There is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us. When we discover this, we are less prone to hate our enemies.
- [Mohandas K. Gandhi](#): It is easy enough to be friendly to one's friends. But to befriend the one who regards himself as your enemy is the quintessence of true religion. The other is mere business.
- [Moshe Dayan](#): If you want to make peace, you don't talk to your friends. You talk to your enemies.
- [Unknown](#): Friends come and go, but enemies accumulate.

2. How are you like God when you love your enemies (45)?

How are you like an unbeliever if you love only the people who are kind to you?

3. What causes people to become enemies?

How can friends or family members become enemies?

When have you struggled with someone at first, but later became friends? What changed?

4. How did Jesus live this principle of loving his enemies?  
*“He could have called 10,000 angels...”*

5. What are the risks of treating your enemies well?

What are the risks of not treating your enemies well?

6. How does pride factor into difficulties with people who oppose us? What about fear?

When can you overlook an offense? Could it be funny coming from a child but offensive coming from your boss? What is the difference in these two reactions?

How does knowing God is in charge of your life take the threat out of threatening situations? Rom. 8:31

† **The million-dollar question** *If you ask only one question, let this be it. Allow at least 20 minutes. Go around the circle and give each person an opportunity to answer. It's okay if they pass, but at least they get a chance to respond.*

Counselors use a concept of acting better than you feel, then the feelings come later.

How does this concept fit with Matthew 5:43-48?

What is a situation lately that has required you to act better than you feel?

## Resources

### **Bible notes**

- Matthew 5:21-48 is a series of statements where Jesus quotes religious phrases, some from the Bible and others from the Pharisees' tradition, and then he lays down his new interpretation.
- Leviticus 19:18 ("Love your neighbor") was apparently an obscure text until Jesus elevated it as one of the core concepts of his teaching.
- Some scholars see the Sermon on the Mount as a re-enactment of Moses giving the Law at Mt. Sinai. It starts with Jesus addressing core principles found in the 10 commandments (killing, adultery, lying).

**Kid-friendly activity.** *An activity designed to help kids and adults grow in faith together. Do this first, then dismiss the kids so the adults can talk.*

The gospel for Barbies.

Give each kid a puppet. Kids have great imaginations, so the puppets could be anything:  
You could use dolls, stuffed animals, rocks, spoons, etc.  
You could bring craft supplies and ask each kid to make a puppet.

Ask the puppets to set up a campsite for the weekend together.  
Encourage them to be kind, to act the way Jesus wants us to.

In the middle of the night, a flood washed away the campsite. Set up a new campsite at another place, but this time be grumpy & mean.

Which way of setting up the camp was better – kind or grumpy?  
*Heads Up – some of the kids will get a bigger charge out of being mean, and they'll say so. It's fun for a few minutes of pretend, but ask if that's really how they want to be treated.*

Read Matthew 5:43-45 aloud.

How does Jesus say we should treat people who are mean to us?

What do you want to do if someone is mean to you?

Why should we follow Jesus' instructions?

Which is harder – to be mean or kind to enemies?  
*Being mean is much easier – that's why Jesus says to pray!*



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## **LIFE Group Guide**

### **Matthew 5 – Love your enemies**

By John Grant (jgrant@collegehills.org)

The theme for this meeting: **Loving your enemies.**

Loving your enemy is one of the toughest things Jesus called us to do. This week's guide considers how and why to do that.

December is a challenging time for LIFE groups to meet. The next three LG dates are Dec. 6 (next week), Dec. 20, and Jan. 3.

A couple of ideas...

- Meet even if it's going to be a smaller crowd than normal.
- Get together for caroling, a party, or a service project at a special time such as a Friday night.
- Plan a special event for Jan. 3 when everybody gets back.

Leadership tip:

The less you talk the better the group (and that's not because you have nothing to share). The goal is to invite people to bring their lives into conversation with the gospel. As they connect scripture to their story, they often make a greater commitment to Christ. That's why the "million dollar question" invites everyone to share, and not just the big talkers.

**Relate** *Use a few to introduce the theme, check everyone's spiritual pulse, and "break the ice." No right or wrong answers – maybe goofy but not wrong! Look for opportunities to affirm and encourage through these questions.*

- ❖ The best way to deal with holiday leftovers is...
- ❖ When do you act better than you feel?  
*Working with a cold, being polite to a rude person, nurturing your child even when he or she is highly ungrateful, etc.*
- ❖ Who is someone you admire for the way they responded to opponents or critics?