

LOVING THOSE WHO DO NOT LOVE US

All Activity Sheets

KEY WORDS

LOVE BLESS ENEMIES

BIBLICAL REFERENCE

Matthew 5:38-48; 6:47-56; Luke 22:51-53

LESSON OBJECTIVE

To help the children understand that Jesus teaches us to love our enemies

MEMORY VERSE

“Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you” (Luke 6:27b-28, NIV*).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

To love our enemies means to forgive, without wanting to retaliate or seek revenge on them. It is feeling peaceful instead of feeling vengeful.

We can only truly forgive if God is put first in our life and in our heart. Through him, the love that we experience is pure. God surrendered everything when he sent his son, Jesus Christ. To receive this unmerited gift, we should also love our neighbors.

This love is not just about feeling good around someone. The perfect love that Jesus tells us to have is not only a feeling, but a willingness of the heart to love and to be kind, refusing to fuel our hurt, affliction and resentment.

With God’s help, we can overcome resentment, anger, and vengeance, or whatever else is interfering with loving our brothers. All of these things affect our life. The approach that Jesus showed when loving our brothers is to show mercy and forgiveness. It is not a passive response towards the bad. In deciding to respond with love, mercy and forgiveness, we demonstrate being free from sin and the freedom to choose what is right.

Jesus gave us an example of how we should treat our enemies when they arrested him and Judas betrayed him with a kiss. Even though this was a way to greet a friend, it was also the signal that identified Jesus so he could be arrested.

Even though Judas had joined forces with the enemy, Jesus continued to call him “friend.” To welcome a traitor with friendly words is like Jesus saying, “Judas, I have not changed. The one who changed is you, but the way to grace and forgiveness is always open” (Matthew 26:47-56).

Peter’s immediate reaction right before the arrest of Jesus was to attack his enemies. He cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest; but Jesus healed him. Jesus did not want violence. Jesus healed the one that wanted to kill him. What kind of love is that?

During this time in their lives, children hope that life is fair to them. If they are friendly to someone, they assume they will receive friendliness in return. Whereas, if someone hurts them, they seek revenge.

Your children need to understand what Jesus was saying when he said, “Love your enemies.” Love from the Lord is not just a feeling; it demands action on our part.

It is hard to forgive someone who has done us wrong, when it seems that they do not deserve it.

Your children also need to know that not loving or not forgiving interferes with their relationship with God. You cannot love God while not loving your brothers/sisters.

Jesus’ teachings about “turning the other cheek” or “walking the second mile” does not mean that people should take advantage of others. The children need to validate their rights, but they should also learn to forgive and not retaliate against people who have hurt them.

INTRODUCE THE LESSON

Would you love someone like this?

Distribute Student Activity Sheet #302-A. Ask, “Why do you think these people are ‘wanted’?” Have them write their answers on the lines under each picture. Each picture represents someone who could be an enemy. The first is a dangerous man; the second is a neighbor that perhaps gets irritated when children come in his yard and make too much noise; the third shows some friends who are angry with each other.

Have the children write why each case could represent an enemy. And in the blank frame, have them draw someone they consider an enemy. Make sure to tell the children not to mention any actual names of people.

Ask them to write about an occasion when someone hurt them. They can refer to the same person(s) they drew. Ask them: “How did you react?”

“What happens between us and God when we hate someone?” (Help them understand that if we hate someone and we do not forgive them, this will affect our relationship with God. To love God means to love our neighbors, including our enemies.)

Distribute Student Activity Sheet #302-B and #302-C.

TEACH THE LESSON

While Jesus went around preaching and healing people, some religious leaders did not agree with what he spoke about or what he did. They became his enemies and plotted to kill him.

One night, Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray; when he returned, he found his disciples sleeping.

“Are you still sleeping? Look, they are coming, and the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!” said Jesus.

Suddenly, lots of people with spears and sticks appeared. Judas came close to Jesus and said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” Then he gave him a kiss on the cheek, the same way that friends greeted each other in those days. This was the signal that Judas said would show which one was Jesus. How terrible that one of the disciples had become his enemy. But Jesus said to him “Do what you came for, friend.”

Then the men surrounded Jesus and arrested him. His other disciples could not believe what was happening and wanted to defend him. Peter even took out his sword and cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest. This is not what Jesus had wanted to happen. He knew his mission. He knew that they would arrest him and then crucify him, but he also wanted to protect his disciples. “Put your sword back in its place,” Jesus said to him, “for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?”

After all, of this, Jesus did something surprising. He touched the ear of the high priest's servant and healed it. Afterwards he said to his enemies, "Am I leading a rebellion that you have come with swords and clubs? Every day I was with you in the temple courts, and you did not lay a hand on me. But this is your hour – when darkness reigns." All of His disciples fled in fear for their lives, leaving him alone. Later, they understood what Jesus wanted to say that night when he said, "Love your enemies" (Matthew 5, 26 and Luke 22).

CONNECT THE LESSON

What does this mean?

Ask a volunteer to read Matthew 5:44. Explain the meaning of the words "Enemy" and "Mercy."

Enemy: A person, group or country who has bad desires and attitudes towards a person, group or country, and looks for ways to hurt the other.

Mercy: Compassion that helps us forgive. To do what is right, showing kindness to an enemy, especially when it is not expected.

Ask, "Who were Jesus' enemies?" (Mention how the disciples reacted to Jesus' enemies.) "How did Jesus act in front of his enemies?" (He called Judas his friend and healed the ear of someone who wanted to kill him.) "In Matthew 5:38-48, Jesus teaches us to love our enemies. If we love God and understand his love towards others, we can experience this type of caring towards others."

"What kind of love does God talk to us about?" (It is not only a feeling, it is an action. It has not to say that our enemies will begin to like us, but at least we can forgive those who have hurt us. In order to love in this way, it is necessary to have God's power. We can suffer from loving like this, but our love towards others should not change. This is the kind of love that pleases God. It is quite possible that our enemies will not change, and perhaps we will not get their love in exchange. However we are obeying God's wishes.

Tell your children that in Jesus' times the people practiced a rule that said, "An eye for an eye." Write these words on the whiteboard, blackboard or poster paper and ask, "What do you think this means?" (Compare the attitude that sometimes children have while playing. Do they want to seek revenge on someone who has hurt them? Or will they forgive them?)

Say: "Jesus taught us to love our neighbors. He said that we should forgive our enemies. Think about someone who it has been hard to forgive. How can we show this kind of love to someone?" Take time to ask God to help them to love and forgive.

PRACTICE THE MEMORY VERSE

[Download Additional Memory Verse Activities PDF](#)

[Download Suggestions for Bible Memorization PDF](#)

Distribute Student Activity Sheet #302-D. Use this activity to help the group remember the memory verse.

You can also prepare beforehand a medium-size box covered with a picture of a bomb or dynamite. Recite the verse with the children (Luke 6:27-28). Organize them in a circle and have them pass the box between them. When you clap, they are to pass the box around. When you stop clapping, they must stop passing the box.

Turn your back to them and start to clap and they must pass the box. When you stop clapping, turn around to see who has the box. The child that has the box in their hands when you stop clapping will need to recite the verse from memory. If the child does not know the verse all the way, you can help them by giving them a couple of words and help them finish the verse.

WRAP-UP

Pray

To end the lesson, ask a student to pray and thank God that they were able to have the session and that they will be able to come back again.

Encourage

Show appreciation for the students' attendance and ask them not to forget what they learned.

Invite

Announce something about the next session to increase the group's interest. Encourage them to invite friends.