

LESSON 14

# The Sermon on the Mount—Love Your Enemies

MATTHEW 5:38–48



BIBLE TRUTH

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

LESSON SNAPSHOT

1. **OPENING REVIEW** . . . . . 5 MIN

Use last week’s lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

2. **BIBLE STORY** . . . . . 10 MIN

Read Matthew 5:38–48 from the Scriptures or read story 92, “The Sermon on the Mount—Love Your Enemies,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

3. **OBJECT LESSON 1** . . . . . 10 MIN

Who Are Our Enemies?

**SUPPLIES:**

- ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase marker

4. **TEACHING/DISCUSSION** . . . . . 10 MIN

Using the teaching points, teach through the lesson for today.

5. **OBJECT LESSON 2** . . . . . 15 MIN

Only Perfection Will Do

**SUPPLIES:**

- ✓ paper and pencils for the class
- ✓ a twelve-inch ruler
- ✓ one three-inch circle drawn with a compass on tracing paper for the leader
- ✓ prizes to be passed out to winners or to the whole class (such as small candy of some sort or pretzels)

6. **SWORD BIBLE MEMORY** . . . . . 5 MIN

7. **ACTIVITY TIME** . . . . . 10 MIN

Letters to an Enemy

**SUPPLIES:**

- ✓ half sheets of 8½-by-11 paper—one 5½-by-8½ portion for each child
- ✓ colored pencils and crayons

8. **CLOSING PRAYER** . . . . . 5 MIN

9. **BONUS OBJECT LESSON** . . . . . 15 MIN

Before and After

**TOTAL 85 MIN**

PREPARING TO TEACH

TEACHING POINTS

**Do not seek revenge**—In this passage Jesus cautions against taking revenge. The Old Testament law said, It shall be “life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot” (Exodus 21:24). Judges used this standard to limit the degree of retribution that could legally be taken. However, it became a way to justify seeking vengeance. Jesus spoke against this practice, saying that instead of slapping back we are to show love. Yet Jesus knew there were also times to stand our ground. For instance, Jesus resisted the evil of Satan and would not be forced to become Israel’s king (John 6:15).

**Treat all men with love**—In Leviticus 19:18, God commanded the Israelites not to bear a grudge against anyone, but rather to love their neighbor as themselves. Here, Jesus presents a radical clarification: even our enemies are our neighbors, and we should love them! This would be particularly offensive to the Jew. To consider a Samaritan or Gentile as a neighbor was unthinkable. What the Jews did not know is that Jesus came to break down the barrier between Jew and Gentile. All people are created in the image of God; Jesus died for people of every tribe, nation, and race. He demonstrated the ultimate example of loving his enemies when he died on the cross.

**Be perfect as God is perfect**—With this command to be perfect, the notion that one might merit salvation by one’s obedience is utterly dispelled. If perfection is the standard for obedience, who can qualify? The answer is that no one qualifies for this righteousness by his or her own works. We can qualify only because Jesus lived a perfect life in our place. God imputes Christ’s righteousness to the account of those who believe and place their trust in Jesus. We are thus perfect in Christ on account of his perfection alone.

## Where Is the Gospel?

How does today's Bible story fit into God's greater plan of redemption?

The call to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect (Matthew 5:48) is an impossible standard to measure up to. If our salvation depends on our being perfect, then no human in the history of the world could enter heaven. That is where the gospel becomes our only hope. Jesus fulfilled the law perfectly by meeting all of its requirements perfectly. Jesus also fulfilled the strict standard he presented in the Sermon on the Mount to love your enemies. Jesus perfectly followed his teaching to love his enemies. Jesus died on the cross to take our sins away—but that leaves us without righteousness. Jesus also lived a sinless life so that he could then give that righteousness to us as our representative.

### THE LESSON

#### OPENING REVIEW . . . . . 5 MIN

Use last week's lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

#### BIBLE STORY . . . . . 10 MIN

Read Matthew 5:38–48 from the Scriptures or read story 92, “The Sermon on the Mount—Love Your Enemies,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

#### OBJECT LESSON 1 . . . . . 10 MIN

##### Who Are Our Enemies?

**SUPPLIES:**

- ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase marker

Help the class see who our enemies are and how we can love them.

Make a list of your enemies on the board. Ask the class who their enemies are. This can include a brother who steals their toy, a local criminal, or even a whole nation of people if you are at war.

Once the list is on the board, ask the class how they might love these enemies. Lead them to the following conclusions:

Pray for them.

Forgive them.

Reach out to them in love.

Help the children see how Jesus does each of these for us.

Jesus intercedes for us (Romans 8:34).

Jesus forgives us (1 John 1:9).

God reached out to us in love by sending Jesus (John 3:16).

**TEACHING/DISCUSSION . . . . . 10 MIN**

Using the teaching points, teach through the lesson for today.

**OBJECT LESON 2 . . . . . 15 MIN**

**Only Perfection Will Do**

**SUPPLIES:**

- ✓ paper and pencils for the class
- ✓ a twelve-inch ruler
- ✓ one three-inch circle drawn with a compass on tracing paper for the leader
- ✓ prizes to be passed out to winners or to the whole class (such as small candy of some sort or pretzels)

Use this exercise to illustrate that only perfect obedience is acceptable to God as righteousness.

Pass out the paper to the class and tell them you are going to give a prize to anyone who can draw a perfect, three-inch circle. Tell them they may not use a ruler but that you will come around and measure when they are done. They might object, saying that it is impossible or too hard. Just have them give it a try.

Use your ruler at first to determine if they have a three-inch circle. You are likely to find one that is three inches in some dimension. When you find a three-inch circle, announce that you have found a drawing that is three inches and now you simply need to determine if it is a circle. Take out your tracing paper and overlay your perfect drawing upon the freehand circle. This will quickly expose irregularities. Announce that it is not a perfect circle so it cannot win a prize.

When the students object, explain that if the lines veered off course the circle no longer qualified because a circle is one unbroken continuous arc. When they complain, use it as an illustration to talk about God’s standard of perfection in contrast to our sin.

Talk to them about grace by saying that you will allow your circle to qualify as theirs. Then pass out the prize to each student explaining how Jesus’ perfect life has been given to all who believe.

**SWORD BIBLE MEMORY . . . . . 5 MIN**

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

**ACTIVITY TIME . . . . . 10 MIN**

**Letters to an Enemy**

**SUPPLIES:**

- ✓ half sheets of 8½-by-11 paper—one 5½-by-8½ portion for each child
- ✓ colored pencils and crayons

Tell the class you are going to have them make a card to give to one of their brothers or sisters or friends with whom they argue and fight the most as a way to demonstrate love toward a person they might at times think is their enemy.

Instruct the class to fold their papers in half crosswise to make cards with a finished size of 4¼-by-5½. Then have them write the words: “May God’s grace be with you today!” on the right side of the front. Then turn the paper over and on the right side of the back, write: “Thanks for your friendship.”

After writing the greeting, have the class decorate their cards and take them along to give to the person.

Talk as a class about how giving a gift to a person with whom we tend to argue is an expression of “loving your enemies.”

**CLOSING PRAYER . . . . . 5 MIN**

Pick several children to pray prayers based on the day's Scripture passages.

**BONUS OBJECT LESSON . . . . . 15 MIN**

**Before and After**

Ask the class to describe a time when someone treated them like an enemy and they did NOT respond with love. Draw out some of the details then ask for volunteers to come up in front of the class and act out the scene. Once the children have acted out the scene, ask the class how the offended party could respond in love.

Plan out a new scene and have the same children act it out following Jesus' teaching from the Sermon on the Mount. Do several different scenarios to help the children apply the teaching.

