Life Group Discussion Guide

Love for Enemies

Main Scripture: Matthew 5:38–48

Sermon summary

In Matthew 5:38–48, Jesus challenges His followers to respond to hurt, injustice, and opposition differently from the world. Instead of retaliating against those who hurt us, Jesus calls us to break the cycle of revenge, extend love beyond those who love us in return, and pray for those who mistreat us.

Loving our enemies doesn't mean excusing sin, abandoning justice, trusting someone who has repeatedly betrayed us, or remaining in an abusive situation. It means refusing to let someone else's sin produce hatred and bitterness in our hearts. We can seek justice while leaving vengeance in God's hands, desire someone's repentance rather than their suffering, and establish healthy boundaries while asking God to transform our hearts.

Ultimately, this kind of love reflects our Heavenly Father's character. We can love those who hurt us because Jesus loved us when we were still sinners and made a way for us to be reconciled to God. Spiritual maturity is revealed not only in how we love those who love us, but also in how we respond to those who don't.

Life Group discussion questions

These questions are designed to move your group from understanding the passage to examining their hearts and taking practical steps of obedience.

Life Group Leader(s) don't feel pressured to get through every question. Choose the questions that best fit your group's needs, allow room for honest sharing, and gently bring the conversation back to Scripture. The goal isn't merely to discuss loving our enemies; it's to help people take their next step toward living it out.

Opening question: Let's get honest

1. What stood out to you most from Sunday's sermon, and why?
2. Why do you think it's easier to love people who love us than to love people who hurt us?
3. When someone wrongs you, what is your natural response: confrontation, withdrawal, retaliation, gossip, or something else?

Go deeper: Breaking the cycle of retaliation

Romans 12:17–21. Read Matthew 5:38–42 and

4. Pastor Juan asked, “Are you responding to the people who hurt you out of the character of Christ—or out of the wounds they left behind?” How would you answer that question honestly about your own life?

5. What is the difference between seeking justice and seeking revenge? Can you share an example of how someone might pursue justice without becoming vengeful?

6. Romans 12:21 says to overcome evil with good. What might that look like when someone gossips about you, betrays your trust, or treats you disrespectfully?

7. Challenge question: Have you ever justified an ungodly response because someone else sinned against you? What would it look like to take responsibility for your response without minimizing what they did to you?

Go deeper: Loving enemies and desiring their repentance

Read Matthew 5:43–45 and Ezekiel 33:11.

8. Jesus commands us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. What makes this command so difficult to obey?

9. What is the difference between wanting someone to experience the consequences of their actions and wanting them to suffer because they hurt you?

10. Ezekiel 33:11 reveals God's desire for the wicked to turn from their ways and live. How can we genuinely desire someone's repentance when we are still hurting from what they did to us?

11. Think about a person who has hurt you. What would change in your heart if you began praying for their repentance, healing, and salvation rather than rehearsing what they did to you?

Go deeper: Forgiveness, accountability, and boundaries

Read Luke 17:3 and Romans 12:19.

12. Why do some Christians confuse forgiveness with trusting someone again or restoring a relationship immediately?

13. How can you forgive someone while still maintaining appropriate boundaries and accountability?

14. Is there someone you need to forgive but with whom reconciliation may not currently be possible? What would it look like to surrender that situation to God?

15. Challenge question: Are you holding on to resentment because you believe that forgiving someone means they get away with what they did? What does leaving vengeance in God's hands require of you?

Go deeper: Becoming spiritually mature

Read Matthew 5:46–48 and Romans 5:8–10.

16. Jesus says that even people who don't follow Him love those who love them. What should distinguish the way Christians respond to difficult people?

17. How does remembering that Jesus loved us while we were still sinners change the way we see those who have hurt us?

18. Romans 5:10 reminds us that God reconciled us to Himself while we were His enemies. How should receiving God's mercy influence the mercy we extend to others?

19. What might your family, coworkers, or friends learn about Jesus by watching how you respond to someone who mistreats you?

20. Heart-searching question: Is there someone whose name still produces anger, bitterness, or resentment in you? What might God be inviting you to surrender to Him?

4. Personal application: Take the challenge this week

Invite each person to choose one practical step. Give the group a moment of silence to reflect before sharing.

Choose one or more commitments for the coming week.

Surrender the wound

Identify the hurt you have been carrying and honestly bring it before God.

Pray for your enemy

Pray daily for the person's repentance and for God to work in both of your hearts.

Refuse retaliation

Choose not to gossip, insult, humiliate, or seek revenge when you have an opportunity.

Practice wise boundaries

Take a loving, truthful step toward accountability or safety where needed.

Extend Christlike love

Choose one concrete action that honors Jesus, without compromising truth or wisdom.

Copy my commitments

Then ask everyone to complete this sentence:

“This week, because I follow Jesus, I will _____ when _____.”

Encourage people to make their commitment specific and measurable.

5. Closing challenge for the group leader

You can use these words to close your discussion:

> Church family, loving our enemies is not about pretending we weren't hurt. It is about refusing to let our hurt determine who we become.
>
> We can seek justice without seeking revenge. We can forgive without removing accountability. We can establish boundaries without hatred. And we can pray for someone's repentance even when our emotions haven't caught up with our faith.
>
> Remember, Jesus loved us when we were still sinners. We didn't earn His mercy, yet He extended it to us.
>
> So here's the question: If Jesus has shown us that kind of mercy, what is keeping us from extending His love to the people who have hurt us?
>
> This week, don't just ask God to change the person who hurt you. Ask Him to transform your heart, too.

Closing prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for loving us when we were still sinners and for showing us mercy through Jesus Christ. Search our hearts and reveal any bitterness, resentment, pride, or desire for revenge that we are holding on to. Give us the courage to forgive, the wisdom to maintain healthy boundaries, and the strength to overcome evil with good. Help us desire repentance rather than destruction for those who have hurt us. Transform us to reflect the character of Jesus, even when loving others is difficult. May the way we treat our enemies point people toward Your grace and truth. In Jesus' name, amen.