

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

Do you Have an Enemy?

4. TEACHING/DISCUSSION

Select one of the object lessons to use to cover the teaching points.

5. OBJECT LESSON 2 15 MIN

Learning from Jesus’ Example

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ pencils and paper
- ✓ Bibles for the class

6. SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

7. ACTIVITY TIME 15 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 10 MIN

Battle Ball

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ ten full sheets of newspaper
- ✓ prizes for the winners

TOTAL 75 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.

A LITTLE BIT MORE

An Eye for an Eye, a Tooth for a Tooth

This expression was first given through Moses to God’s people in Exodus 21:24 as a way to limit the restitution exacted when someone wronged another and prevent revenge from leading to further evil. Leviticus 24:20 allows a person to be killed if they murder another person, but not if they kill someone’s animal, for instance. The punishment was to fit the crime. The punishment was meant both to regulate repayment as well as evoke a healthy fear of judgment, which would restrain evil (see Deuteronomy 19:20–21).

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

Do You Have an Enemy?

Prior to teaching the passage, ask the class if anyone has ever treated them like an enemy. Have a few children share their experiences. Tell the children not to mention the person's name, and after their story ask them what they did in response. If necessary, prime the class by giving the following suggestions:

- Perhaps a neighbor started an argument with you or falsely accused you or damaged something you own.
- Perhaps a fellow student stole something from you or said something unkind.
- Perhaps a brother or sister treated you poorly, and although they are a member of your family, it felt like they were your enemy in that moment.

Use the children’s experiences as illustrations as you go through today’s teaching points. When your teaching is complete, come back to some of the stories and ask how they would handle some of the situations differently, knowing that the Bible tells us how we are to treat our enemies. Help the children apply the teaching. (Be aware that even in a Christian context your students could be the victim of bullying. You may want to follow up with a child and/or their parents to talk about a specific situation they may need help knowing how to handle. We are always called to love those who persecute us, but that doesn’t mean we can’t make the proper authorities aware of the challenges we face with particular individuals.)

TEACHING/DISCUSSION

Select one of the object lessons to use to cover the teaching points.

OBJECT LESSON 2 15 MIN

Learning from Jesus’ Example

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ pencils and paper
- ✓ Bibles for the class

Have the children read Matthew 5:38–39 with Mark 14:65; 15:16–20 and write answers to the following questions:

- How did Jesus obey his own teaching from the Sermon on the Mount?
(Jesus did not seek revenge, but accepted the blows handed him by his accusers.)
- Read Isaiah 50:6–7. How are Jesus’ actions in keeping with Isaiah’s prophecy?
(Jesus was steadfast despite beatings, spitting, and mocking.)

■ When might we be called to such action?

(As well as the more normal possibilities, be sure to consider how we might be called to physical persecution as Christians.)

After they finish, review their answers and point them to the amazing example of Christ.

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 15 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 10 MIN**Battle Ball****SUPPLIES:**

- ✓ ten full sheets of newspaper
- ✓ prizes for the winners

This game is designed to illustrate how radical it is to love your enemy. Prior to class, recruit a student to help you with this exercise.

Wad up the newspaper into ten balls. Recruit twelve volunteers and divide them into two teams. (You may do multiple rounds, without the accomplice after the first round, or come back to this game at the end of class to use up extra time.)

Each team is assigned five attackers and one retriever. (Your accomplice should be the retriever for one of the teams.) Give each team five paper balls. The object of the game is to hit an opponent (enemy) with a ball. If a person is hit, they are out of the game and must sit down. If a person catches an opponent's throw, the thrower is out of the game. Only an attacker can throw the balls, but only the retriever may pick them up off the floor or other objects. If an attacker picks a ball from the floor or other object, they are out of the game. The team with the last attacker remaining is the winner.

Once play begins, your helper should start retrieving the balls off the floor for his own team, but a little into the round should start giving balls to the opposing team. This should cause the whole game to break down. Stop for a moment and talk about the passage and what happened.

- **What happened when the retriever started giving the enemy your ammunition?**
(We got upset, we thought it wasn't fair, etc.)
- **Wasn't your retriever simply loving his enemies?**
(Yes, but it seemed so unfair.)
- **How does this shed light on the amazing thing Jesus did when he died on the cross for our sins?**
(We begin to have a glimpse of the injustice of Jesus dying on the cross for our sin when we consider how it felt to have our ammunition given away.)
- **How can remembering that feeling help you to be grateful for what Jesus did?**
(Sometimes we can think about the sacrifice of Jesus too casually, as though there was no real cost. Jesus really suffered that we would not need to suffer.)

Go ahead and play a round without giving away any ammunition. Give the whole class a chance to play, and then celebrate the winning team.