

# THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT: LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: MATTHEW 5:38-48



*Love your enemies.*

## The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

### Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

**Do not seek revenge** – In this passage, Jesus cautions us against taking revenge. This passage is not meant to completely prohibit all resistance to all evil. For instance, Jesus resisted the evil of Satan and would not be forced to become Israel's king (John 6:15). This passage is not prohibiting us from defending ourselves or defending someone who is defenseless, such as a woman or child. Rather this passage is speaking to our sinful heart that desires to bring judgment on anyone who wrongs us. Here Jesus is introducing grace. The power to live a grace-filled life in this world comes when we consider eternity. If our hope lies beyond this life (into the next), we can easily give up material blessings and our violated sense of justice here and trust the Eternal Judge to vindicate our cause in his time.

**Love those who persecute you** – In Leviticus 19:18, God commanded the Israelites not to bear a grudge against anyone. He said to love your neighbor as yourself. 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 race, tribe, and nation. Jesus 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? 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. For those who believe and place their trust in Jesus, God imputes Christ's righteousness to their account. We are thus perfect in Christ on account of His perfection alone.

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### WHERE IS THE GOSPEL?

*Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.*

Jesus fulfilled the law by meeting all of its requirements. Jesus also fulfilled the strict standard He presented in the Sermon on the Mount to love your enemies. Jesus followed his teaching to love His enemies. Paul said to the Romans:

"If while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, how much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life." (Romans 5:10)

The requirement that we should love our enemies and be perfect is an impossible task. Jesus gave us His perfect obedience in exchange for our sinfulness. Even though we cannot follow perfectly, we should strive to follow Jesus' example to love those who persecute us. By doing so, we give the Lord glory.



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### ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.

**Bible Passage: Isaiah 50:5,6**

#### **Connecting the passage to Christ:**

Jesus, at the time of His arrest, was beaten and spat upon. Jesus received this punishment, suffered cruelly and was crucified for our sins. He did this with joy, scorning the shame of the cross for our sake. It was in doing so that Jesus exemplified his own teaching when He said in Matthew 5:39, "Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also."

#### **Questions for reflection:**

- Why didn't Jesus resist? (Jesus willingly took our punishment that He did not deserve. To resist would have been to reject being our substitute.)
- How should Jesus' example affect the way we treat one another? (Jesus' example in suffering for us should motivate us to want to obey Matthew 5:44 and love our enemies.)



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## SWORD BIBLE MEMORY

### BE A DOER OF THE WORD

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.

## ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?

### ONLY PERFECT WILL DO

#### Supplies:

- paper and pencils for the class
- one 3" 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 or some sort of pretzels)

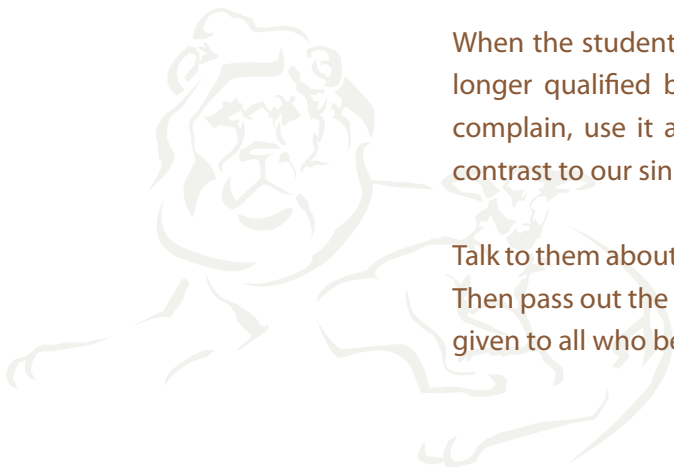
Use this exercise to illustrate that only perfect obedience is acceptable to God as righteousness.

Pass out the paper to the class and tell them you are going to give a prize to anyone who can draw a 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 3" circle announce that you have found a drawing that is three inches and now 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 varied 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.



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### BATTLE BALL

**Supplies:**

ten full sheets of newspaper, prizes for the winners

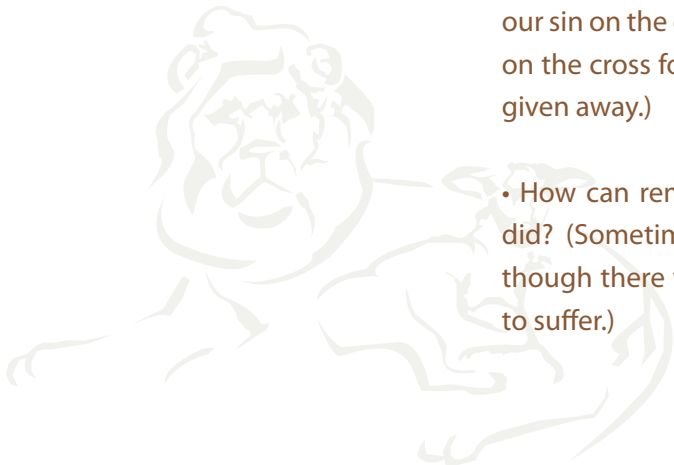
This game is designed to illustrate how drastic it is to love your enemy.

Wad up the newspaper into ten balls. Choose 12 volunteers with the remainder of the class as spectators. (You can do multiple rounds to give everyone a chance.) Prior to class pick out a person to help you with this exercise.

Each team is assigned five attackers and one retriever. (Your accomplice should be the retriever for one of the teams.) Give each team five balls of paper. The object of the game is to hit an opponent (enemy) with the wad of paper. 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 up 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 onto the amazing thing Jesus did when He died for our sin on the cross? (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 not real cost. Jesus really suffered that we would not need to suffer.)



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### WHO ARE OUR ENEMIES?

**Supplies:**

white board

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).



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### PRAYER

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

### IN CLASS PROJECT

#### AN ACTIVITY

**Supplies:** Draw a picture of Matthew 5:40.  
pencil and paper

### FOR THE OLDER GRADES

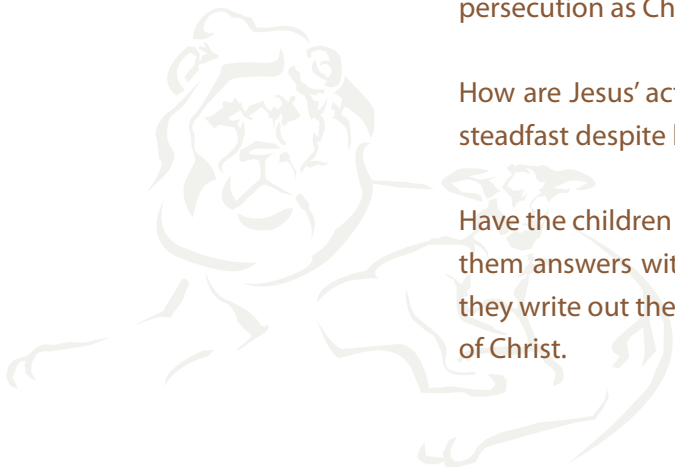
**Supplies:** Compare and contrast Matthew 5:38-39 with Mark 14:65 and Mark 15:16-20. Ask the class to write an answer to the following question:  
pencil and paper

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.)

When might we be called to such action? (Rather than thinking of a time when someone threatens us for no reason, think of how we might be called to physical persecution as Christians.)

How are Jesus' actions in keeping with the prophecy in Isaiah 50:6-7? (Jesus was steadfast despite beatings, spitting and mocking.)

Have the children look up these verses and think for themselves. Too often we give them answers without making them discover connections for themselves. After they write out their answers, review them and point them to the amazing example of Christ.



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### 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 in order to restrain evil (see Deuteronomy 19:20,21).

