FBC SUMMIT

LIFE Group Discussion Guide

October 18, 2026

Matthew 5:43-48

CONVERSATION STARTERS

What are some highs or lows you experienced this past week?

What Scripture has been shaping you recently?

Where have you seen God moving in your life this week?

What did you hear in today's sermon OR read in today's passage that you would like to discuss?

What did you learn about yourself in today's sermon/passage?

What did you learn about God in today's sermon/passage?

What convicted you as you listened to today's sermon OR read in today's passage?

OPENING

Who is someone who has made a positive difference in your life simply by treating you with kindness? What did that kindness mean to you?

Loving people who love us is relatively easy. Loving people who disagree with us, mistreat us, or even consider themselves our enemies is much more difficult.
Yet Jesus calls His followers to something radically different.

In Matthew 5:43–48, Jesus commands His disciples to love their enemies and pray for those who persecute them. He points us toward the character of God, who shows kindness even to people who do not acknowledge or honor Him.

This morning we'll explore how followers of Jesus are called to love their enemies, pray for those who oppose them, and reflect the character of their heavenly Father.

SCRIPTURE READING

Read **Matthew 5:43–48** together.

Ask the group to listen for:

- Who Jesus commands us to love.
- What He says we should do for those who oppose us.
- Why Jesus gives this command.
- What this teaches us about God's character.

PASSAGE SUMMARY

Jesus continues His teaching with the familiar command: "Love your neighbor." But then He addresses a common addition to that command: "Hate your enemy."

The Old Testament does command God's people to love their neighbors, but the command to hate one's personal enemies is not given as a general biblical command. Jesus is correcting a way of thinking that divided people into those who deserved love and those who did not.

Jesus calls His followers to love even those who oppose them. He gives a practical example: **"Pray for those who persecute you."**

Prayer changes the way we view people. Instead of simply seeing someone as an enemy, we begin to see them as a person who needs God's grace just as we do. Jesus then points to God's common grace. God causes the sun to rise and the rain to fall on both the righteous and the unrighteous.

Jesus' followers are called to reflect that same kind of generous love. This doesn't mean approving of someone's sinful behavior, ignoring injustice, or remaining in an unsafe relationship. Loving an enemy can include establishing appropriate boundaries, seeking justice, and telling the truth while refusing hatred and personal revenge.

Jesus concludes by calling His followers to maturity:
"Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

The word perfect carries the idea of completeness or maturity. Jesus is calling His followers to a complete, wholehearted love that is not limited only to people who love us back.

Jesus calls His followers to love beyond their natural circle of relationships and reflect the generous, impartial love of their heavenly Father.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Why is loving our enemies so difficult?
Our natural response is often to protect ourselves, avoid people who hurt us, or retaliate against those who mistreat us. Loving an enemy requires humility, dependence on God, and a willingness to put aside personal revenge.

What is the difference between loving someone and approving of everything they do?
Biblical love seeks another person's good, but it does not require approving of sinful or harmful behavior. We can love someone while disagreeing with them, establishing boundaries, confronting wrongdoing, or seeking justice.

Why does Jesus tell us to pray for those who persecute us?
Prayer changes our perspective and helps us surrender our anger and desire for revenge to God. It also asks God to work in the life of someone who has wronged us.

What does Jesus' reference to the sun and rain teach us about God's character?
God demonstrates kindness and generosity even toward people who do not honor Him. His goodness is not limited to people who deserve it or respond to Him positively.

How does loving our enemies distinguish followers of Jesus from the world?
Most people naturally love those who love them. Jesus calls His followers to demonstrate a deeper kind of love that extends even to people who oppose or mistreat them.

What does loving an enemy look like in practical everyday situations?
It might mean refusing to gossip about someone, praying for them, speaking truthfully rather than maliciously, forgiving personal offenses, helping when appropriate, or refusing to seek revenge.

What does Jesus mean when He says, "Be perfect... as your heavenly Father is perfect"?
Jesus is calling His followers toward spiritual maturity and wholehearted love. The goal is not sinless perfection achieved through our own efforts, but a growing resemblance to the character of God.

APPLICATION

Who is someone you find difficult to love? What makes loving that person difficult?

How might your response to an enemy change if you began praying regularly for that person? What could you pray for?

Is there a situation where you need to replace resentment or revenge with a Christlike response? What would that look like practically?

DIG DEEPER

Read Luke 6:27–36. What additional instructions does Jesus give concerning enemies?

Read Romans 12:17–21. How does Paul explain the relationship between love, revenge, and God's justice?

Read 1 John 4:7–12. What does God's love teach us about loving others?

How does remembering God's grace toward us change the way we view difficult people?

What is the difference between forgiveness, reconciliation, and rebuilding trust?

How can a LIFE Group help one another respond to difficult people with grace rather than resentment?

CLOSING THOUGHT

Jesus' command to love our enemies may be one of the most challenging teachings in the Sermon on the Mount. It goes against our natural instincts. But Jesus isn't simply asking us to try harder to be nicer people. He is calling us to reflect the character of our heavenly Father.

God has shown us grace that we did not earn. He has loved us when we were undeserving. As we understand the grace we have received from Christ, we become better equipped to extend grace to others.

Loving our enemies doesn't mean ignoring wrongdoing or allowing ourselves to be harmed. It means refusing to let hatred, bitterness, and revenge control our hearts.

Ask yourself:
Who is difficult for me to love?

Am I carrying resentment toward someone?

Am I willing to pray for the people who oppose me?

How can my response to difficult people reflect the character of Jesus?

This week, identify one person who is difficult for you to love and intentionally pray for them and ask God to help you see them through His eyes.

We love our enemies not because they deserve our love, but because Christ has shown us undeserved love.

LOOKING AHEAD

Next week we will discuss **Matthew 6:1-4** as we continue the series, *The Greatest Sermon Ever Preached: The Sermon on the Mount.*

PRAYER FOCUS

- Thank God for loving us and showing us grace through Jesus Christ.
- Ask God to help us love people who are difficult to love.
- Pray for those who have hurt, opposed, or mistreated us.
- Ask God to remove bitterness, hatred, and the desire for revenge from our hearts.
- Pray for wisdom to love others while maintaining appropriate boundaries and pursuing justice when necessary.
- Ask God to help our LIFE Groups become communities where Christlike love is practiced even when relationships are difficult.
- Pray specifically for the invitation portion of our worship services—that hearts will be open, the Spirit will move powerfully, and people will respond in obedience to Christ.

COMMENTARY

Matthew 5:43-48

In Matthew 5:43-48, Jesus commands His followers to love and pray for their enemies rather than hating them, reflecting the unconditional, indiscriminate character of God.

Meaning of the Passage

- Correcting the Standard: Jesus addresses the traditional teaching to "love your neighbor and hate your enemy". While Leviticus 19:18 commanded loving one's neighbor, the addition of hating one's enemy was a human distortion, not a divine command.

- Active Love: Jesus tells believers to love enemies and pray for those who harass or persecute them. This love is an active choice demonstrated through deeds and prayer, not just passive feelings.

- Imitating God: By showing kindness to both the evil and the good—just as God sends rain and sun on both the righteous and unrighteous—disciples act as true children of their heavenly Father.

- Exceeding the Ordinary: Loving only friends or greeting only brothers is what tax collectors and Gentiles (outsiders) do. Kingdom citizens are called to a higher, distinct standard of behavior.

- The Call to Completion: Verse 48 concludes that believers must be "complete" (or perfect/mature) just as their heavenly Father is complete in showing love to everyone. [