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

What makes someone easy to like? What makes someone difficult to like?

It's pretty easy to be kind to people who are kind to us. It's much harder when someone has hurt us, embarrassed us, excluded us, or treated us badly.

Jesus takes our relationships even further.

In Matthew 5:43–48, Jesus tells His followers to love their enemies and pray for people who mistreat them. That's not the way most people naturally respond.

Jesus wants His followers to live differently.

This morning we'll learn that following Jesus means loving people even when they don't love us back and showing others the kind of grace God has shown us.

SCRIPTURE

Read **Matthew 5:43–48** together.

Ask students to listen for:

- Who Jesus tells us to love.
- What He tells us to do for people who mistreat us.
- Why Jesus gives this command.
- What this passage teaches us about God.

PASSAGE SUMMARY

Jesus continues teaching in the Sermon on the Mount saying: "Love your neighbor." But then He addresses the idea that people should **"hate your enemy."**

While Scripture commands God's people to love their neighbors, the Bible does not give a general command for people to hate their personal enemies. Jesus is correcting the idea that some people are worthy of love while others aren't.

Jesus tells His followers: "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

That's a challenging command.

Jesus then points to God as our example. God provides sunshine and rain for both people who follow Him and people who don't.

God's kindness isn't limited to people who deserve it.

Jesus wants His followers to reflect that same kind of love.

Loving someone doesn't mean agreeing with everything they do or allowing someone to continue hurting you. We can establish boundaries, seek help, and stand against wrong while still refusing hatred and revenge.

Jesus is calling His followers to something bigger than simply being nice to people who are nice to us.

Jesus calls His followers to love beyond their normal circle of friends and to show grace even toward people who oppose or mistreat them.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Why is it so difficult to love someone who has hurt you?

When someone hurts us, we naturally want to avoid them, get even, or make them feel the way they made us feel. Loving them requires us to respond differently.

What is the difference between loving someone and agreeing with everything they do?
We can love someone while disagreeing with their choices. Biblical love wants what is good for another person, but it doesn't mean approving of everything they do.

Why do you think Jesus tells us to pray for people who mistreat us?
Prayer helps us give our anger and hurt to God. It also changes how we see the person and asks God to work in their life.

What does the example of the sun and rain teach us about God?
God shows kindness and provides for people even when they don't follow or honor Him. His goodness isn't limited to people who deserve it.

How is loving your enemies different from the way people normally respond to enemies?
People often respond to enemies with anger, revenge, insults, gossip, or avoidance. Jesus calls His followers to respond with love, prayer, grace, and truth.

What could loving an "enemy" look like at school?
It might mean refusing to gossip about someone, not joining in when others make fun of them, praying for someone who has hurt you, speaking respectfully, or choosing not to seek revenge.

Does loving someone mean you have to stay close to them?
No. Loving someone doesn't mean allowing unhealthy or harmful behavior. It can be wise to establish boundaries, involve trusted adults, or seek help while still refusing to hate or seek revenge.

APPLICATION

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

What might change if you started praying for someone who has hurt or frustrated you? What could you pray for?

Is there someone you need to forgive or stop trying to get even with? What would a Christlike response look like?

DIG DEEPER

Read Luke 6:27–36. What does Jesus add to His teaching about loving enemies?

Read Romans 12:17–21. What does Paul say about revenge?

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

Why is it easier to love people who are like us or agree with us?

How does remembering God's grace toward us help us show grace to others?

How can our student LIFE Group become a place where people learn to handle conflict with grace and forgiveness?

CLOSING THOUGHT

Jesus' command to love our enemies is one of the hardest things He asks us to do. It's not natural.

If someone hurts us, our first thought may be: "They deserve what they got." But Jesus calls us to something different.

Jesus wants His followers to respond differently because He has changed our hearts.

Ask yourself:
Is there someone I am holding a grudge against?

Am I willing to pray for someone who has hurt me?

Am I more interested in getting even than showing Jesus' love?

What would it look like for me to respond differently?

Challenge:
Think of one person who is difficult for you to love. This week, pray for that person and ask God to help you respond to them with grace rather than anger or revenge.

Remember:
We don't love difficult people because they always deserve it—we love them because Jesus has shown us grace.

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.
- Ask God to help students love people who are difficult to love.
- Pray for students who have been hurt, bullied, excluded, or mistreated.

- Ask God to help students forgive and let go of revenge.
- Pray for wisdom to know when to establish boundaries or ask a trusted adult for help.
- Ask God to help students treat everyone with dignity, kindness, and respect.
- Pray that the student LIFE Group would be a place where students practice grace, forgiveness, and Christlike love.
- 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. [