

## Life Group Discussion Guide “Love Your Enemies” Sunday, June 11, 2017

- Has a sermon every offended you? Why?
- Why might the message of the Gospel be offensive to some?
- What are some expectations or codes of conduct that exist in your family/household?
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### Read Matthew 5:43-48

**The Big Idea Today:** We are members of God’s family. As children of God, we must love our enemies because God loves his enemies. When we love our enemies, we bear a familial **resemblance** to God and live out our **responsibility** to reconcile other people to Jesus.

- How does Jesus change the prevailing attitude we should have toward toward our enemies?
- Read Leviticus 19:18 and Exodus 23:4-5. What was God’s original intention for people to have toward their enemies? How did the people move away from it?

Reasons to love our enemies:

### 1. RESEMBLANCE

- Which person in your family do you resemble the most? How? Do you like sharing a resemblance with him/her?
- What are characteristics or “Kingdom family codes” you think Christians are called to live by?

Read Galatians 4:4, Colossians 3:12, and Ephesians 2:13. What do these verses tell us about our personhood?

Pastor John Piper: God does not leave his children without help to bear the moral image of the family...By grace God awakens and transforms his children.<sup>1</sup>

Romans 8:7 tells us: **The carnal mind is enmity against God.** What is it about the carnal mind that makes us enemies toward God?

The Greek word for love in this passage refers to loving as God loves. How do we know God loves his enemies? What would it look like for us to show love toward our enemies as God does his?

### 2. RESPONSIBILITY

As God’s children, we share the responsibility of bringing others into his family. This makes us complicit in the course of people’s eternity. **And the best way to influence someone’s life for eternity is to pray for them.**

- Have you ever prayed for someone or had someone pray for you in a way that changed your life?

Read Acts 9:10-15

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<sup>1</sup> [Adoption the Heart of the Gospel](#)

- What do you know about Ananias from this passage?
- How do you think you would have responded as Ananias?
- Do you believe prayer could change a person or remove some form of evil from this world?
- How do you think Paul felt to receive prayers from a man who was once his enemy?
- What impact does it make when we show our love to those who don't expect it?

### **Whose God-given destiny depends on your prayers?**

2 Peter 1:3 - His divine power has given us everything we need to live a life of godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. God expects us to love our enemies and he says by my power you will be able to do it.

### **Practical efforts we can make toward loving our enemies**

#### **1. Acknowledge that you are a child of God who was once God's enemy.**

- Take a moment of silence to reflect on some of your past choices that you know were sinful toward God. How do you feel?
- Think back to when you first received or understood that you were forgiven of all your sins through Jesus Christ. How did you feel?

Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. ( 1 Tim 1:15).

#### **2. Pray for your enemies**

- How can we respond to (our own or others') feelings of offense toward loving and forgiving enemies?
- Is it possible to pray for an enemy without meaning it? Do you think God honors reluctant prayers?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the famous WWII German pastor and theologian, says this of praying for others: *In intercessory prayer the face that may have been strange and intolerable to me is transformed into the face of one for whom Christ died...*<sup>2</sup>

#### **3. We must recognize that loving our enemies does not absolve them of wrongdoing. It leaves their punishment in God's hands.**

- What reservations do you have about leaving punishment in God's hands?
- Consider God's sense of absolute justice. Do you believe you could outpunish God?
- What reassurance do we have that God understands and hates the evil we've suffered?
  - Exodus 23:7, Proverbs 31:8-9, Jeremiah 22:3, Romans 12:19,

AW Tozer was a pastor and author in the mid-century who wrote: God's mercy never violates His justice, and God's justice never overpowers His mercy.

Ecclesiastes 3:17 tells us: **God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time for every matter and for every work.**

Close in prayer

- Do you recognize in your sin you are God's enemy and want to be brought into his family?
- Do you need God's power to help you love and pray for an enemy?

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<sup>2</sup> [40 Days with Dietrich Bonhoeffer](#)

