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# Sunday School Lesson

**TOPIC:**

## “Love Your Enemies”

**Matthew 5:38-48**

**VERSE DISCOVERY: Matthew 5:38-48 (KJV, Public Domain)**

### Prepare

- Familiarize yourself with the Sermon on the Mount (the teachings, the setting, etc.). For younger students, gathering pictures to illustrate the story is very helpful (digital slideshow, felt, or print, find pictures of Jesus teaching, coat, walking to demonstrate a mile, and so on). Plan ahead when and where in the lesson you want to insert each picture. It makes for a smoother transition when you are telling the story of the lesson.
- Loving others who one may not get along with is a hard thing to do. Ask your students what are some ways that we show love to people we like? Jot your answers on a board. Next, ask them for ways we can show love to people we don't get along with (be prepared for these answers to be sparse because loving others that hurt us or we don't like goes against what we would normally do). Jot these answers on the board.
- In today's lesson, we are going to learn the importance of loving all people, even people whom we might look at as enemies or don't like. We hear a lot about what would Jesus do, well today we are going to learn that He showed love to the hardest people during the hardest times and He is asking us to do the same thing.

### Explore – Full Lesson Available on pages 4-9

#### Verses 38-42

Love is not always the easiest thing to do, but it is always the right thing to do. There will be times of unfairness that we will face in this life. There will be times of hurt, confusion, and disappointment when we are treated wrongly by others. But through it all, Jesus teaches us to live like He lived which often means to love when love is not being returned.

While in our hearts and minds we may feel justified for not loving others, or even for wanting to get even with our offenders, we're not. Jesus shows the way a Kingdom-minded individual should think in times of persecution and hardship. A child of God lives opposite of what the normal, average Joe would do. A child of God would not seek revenge, but in an effort to live like Jesus, will still try to show love even to those who cause harm, or we don't get along with.

## Verses 43-48

Loving enemies is a hard saying. Doing good to those who hurt you, praying for those who use you – all of that is hard and requires a true walk of faith. But, as representatives of our Heavenly Father here on earth, the choices we make in choosing to love the least likely of all shows that we are trying to live lives that are pleasing to God, and not necessarily according to how we feel or what we believe to be right. In God's economy, He loved us when we were enemies and sinners. All He is asking of us is that we carry on His legacy of love, align our hearts to His Word, and love even our enemies.

## Activities

- Today we can start immediately to try to follow Jesus' commands to love and pray for those who hurt us or don't get along with us. Using the **Journal Page**, write a prayer for someone whom we may be conflict with. Use this page as a reminder to not seek revenge or get even, rather we are handing them and the situation over to the Lord in prayer and we are trusting Him through it all. The children's journal page focuses on going the second mile to show love, even when it's hard (Matthew 5:41).
- Younger students can draw a picture demonstrating going the second mile with others to show love in the **Draw the Scene** section.
- Alternate activity sheets available for those who just want to work with printed materials such as **Word Search, Memory Verse**, etc.

## Review

- Commit to memory the base verse from the lesson: ***“Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;” (Matthew 5:44).***
- Fill out the review sheet provided (page 10)

## Life

What are some “on purpose” acts of kindness we can do toward those who have been unkind to us? Can we pray for that person, send a card stating, “Just thinking about you,” etc.?

Listen to or read through the hymn, *Amazing Grace*, and take in anew the wonders of God's love in saving us. May that same grace be at work mightily in our own lives toward others.

TOPIC:

## “Love Your Enemies”

Matthew 5:38-48

### VERSE DISCOVERY: Matthew 5:38-48 (KJV, Public Domain)

*What does true Christianity look like? How do people know that we are a child of God? What marks us as being different from anyone else? When we decided to do the things that God does and love the way He loves, then people can readily tell whom we belong; who is our Father.*

*In life, there are going to be times of being wronged, hurt, and/or misunderstood. What do we do in these instances? Do we vehemently seek revenge or try to get even?*

*No. Part of being a Christian or living life as God’s people is to extend God’s love to those who refuse to show us kindness in return. It’s going against our human nature when offenses happen by extending the heart of God to those who oppose or war against us; to those whom one would consider being an enemy.*

*When we choose to say no to what our flesh wants to do and yes to what is right in God’s sight, then we are on the right pathway of living lives that are pleasing to Him. We are purposefully living like Jesus did – choosing to love, even the worst, like God does.*

### GOING AGAINST HUMAN NATURE

**Matthew 5:38-42 “Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.”**

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It is during His teaching on the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus lays out the disciplines necessary for a life lived for the Kingdom of God, where this lesson text is found. In that teaching, He clarifies a few points He wants His followers to adhere to. Jesus wanted to set aright some misunderstandings concerning the Law and offers a more Kingdom-approached mindset.

Part of laying out the law in Exodus was to ensure that when people committed a wrong against another or injured another, proper retribution was made. This portion of the law, and similar portions like it, were put in place to keep everything fair and balanced, not only for the offended but for the offender. Both parties would be protected to ensure neither party involved would go overboard in exacting from the other what they believed was due them or deserved. Those who were to receive something in return for an offense would get what's coming to them – nothing more, nothing less. And, those who caused the offense or injury, those on the punishment end of the spectrum would get or give what is their due – nothing more, nothing less.

Basically, laws like this not only promoted fairness, but it limited extreme actions from being taken by another for the least little bit of infractions. The punishment had to fit the crime and not be exaggerated, out of the proportion, or go too far for what was called for.

That's the meaning behind the phrase/verse, ***An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth***, (compare Exodus 21:24). It was not a license for retaliation and revenge. It was a law commanded to keep everything fair and balanced.

Supporting the true nature of the law, Jesus taught, rather than seek revenge, go above and beyond what normal human nature would demand of in times of offense. Do something radically different: ***Resist not evil***. Proverbs 20:22 explains it like this: *“Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the LORD, and he will save thee,”* (compare 1 Peter 3:9). The focus of a Kingdom-minded individual is not seeking to render evil for evil. The focus of a true child of God is to live life like Jesus did, with love and compassion toward one's fellow man. Even their enemies.

And, if it's the Law the people want to quote to justify themselves in rendering to another their “just desserts,” then they also must remember that it is also the Law that states, *“Thou shalt*

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*not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD,” (Leviticus 19:18).*

People can be very self-seeking in matters of avenging and holding grudges. These two things will tear relationships and people down rather than heal and restore. And, that defeats the purpose of the original intent of the Law.

Therefore Jesus, to further drive His point home, continues: ***But whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.*** During the Roman occupation, people in Jesus’ day would suffer many assaults from these soldiers and governing authorities. And, surely too, there would be times when one’s own countrymen would strike out in unjust ways. But, the response of the Christian is not to behave in the same manner as they. They were to respond opposite of what society or their normal human character would dictate.

Other scenarios Jesus gave, such as, ***if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also,*** and, ***whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain,*** demonstrate the previous point He made about not getting caught up in revenge, retaliation, and the seeking of one’s rights. Here, He is instructing them to once again, go above and beyond that, to the point of doing more than what was insistent upon. The Christian is not called to live and act like everyone else, getting caught up in matters that surround the here and now or being entangled with the cares of this life, 2 Timothy 2:4. He/she is called to live and love people as God Himself does, and that often goes against the grain of human nature. And, sometimes it will require one to do extra or more than necessary in order to show the love of God.

When someone has been hurt and broken the last thing on their mind is the benefit of the one who has inflicted the harm. Jesus, knowing what He was going to accomplish on the cross, was teaching His disciples to operate in this world as He would.

All these things that He speaks of in the above verses, all the scenarios of wrongs committed, were to be situations that Jesus Himself would live through, love through, and forgive the offense of others through. They would be things that He would actually demonstrate through His own life: ***“He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth,”*** (Isaiah 53:7).

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Jesus was teaching His disciples that to live as Kingdom-minded people, you will not only have to go against the status quo and cliques of society, but you will also have to fight against your own natural inclinations that don't want to seek the good of those who cause harm.

In addition to that, be giving. ***Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.*** God gave us the greatest gift one could ever hope to receive, the Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:16), who would freely and willingly suffer so much wrong to lay His life down for us. Is it too much for us to **give** as He gave to those in need? Jesus didn't turn others way or turn a blind eye to genuine needs. Do we?

## LOVE LIKE GOD LOVES

**Matthew 5:43-48** “Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

**Love your enemies.** Loving neighbors is one thing, but the words love and enemies don't exactly coincide with one another according to human standards; rather, they usually collide with one another head-on. But Jesus is calling us to use God's Spirit within us to operate on a supernatural level that surpasses our view which is usually obstructed by this natural world.

When one is an enemy that means they are against us. Yet, Jesus' command is to love them anyhow. Show them the same compassion as He did when He allowed them to drive the nails through His hands and feet. He told His disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane at the time of His arrest, “*Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?*” (Matthew 26:53). He could've taken care of His enemies with one swoop of prayer, yet love compelled Him to offer Himself for their release from sin.

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He had a heavenly view for loving His enemies. In that, He laid it all down for them and us and showed just one of the ways one can **do good to them that hate you.**

**Pray for them which spitefully use you, and persecute you.** No one said these sayings were easy, because they're not. If they were, everybody would be doing them. But they are doable because everything that Jesus is telling His followers to do, He did, or would go on to do.

They cursed Him, yet He prayed for them: *"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do,"* (Luke 23:34). They struck Jesus on the cheek (John 18:22; compare with Matthew 5:39 from above), and they divided His clothes (Luke 23:34). He went through it all and never sought His own revenge but continued forth in love.

Following His teachings, even when it's hard, and mimicking the things He did, helps to identify the Christians as true **children of your Father which is in heaven.** In normal, familial relationships there will be some sort of resemblance between parents and children. Certain traits, characteristics, features will be prominent, assuring the fact that this child belongs to me. And, the same is true for those who claim to be spiritual children of God. As His children, some of Him should be seen in us. As we were originally created to be in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27), so too should we represent His image as we have been recreated with a new nature (2 Corinthians 5:17).

God is a good God (Psalm 100:5) and *"He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God,"* (3 John 1:11). In His goodness, He does not withhold the natural graces of nature even from those who are considered **evil and unjust.** He allows the **sun and rain** to benefit them all. How much more in kindness should we operate if we are mimicking our Father?

It is easy for anyone to **love or salute** those who love and salute them back. Jesus, to make sure they understood this concept, used as an illustration one of the most despised people of their day: **the publicans.** The publicans were the local tax collectors on behalf of the Roman government. They placed exorbitant charges on their fellow countrymen and gave to the Romans what belonged to them while pocketing the overages for themselves. Because of this, they were greatly despised among their own people and seen as traitors.

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With that being said, Jesus is making His point, that it is no great thing to treat ones with love and compassion who show the same toward you. Even the most despised of people usually do the same.

It is when one goes above and beyond – that’s what sets them apart as true children of God. When one can step away from their natural tendencies of wanting to retaliate and get even and decide to walk the path that leads us to **perfect** living; one that mimics our **Father which is in heaven is perfect**, can they truly say they are loving as God loves. They are seeing people the way the Father sees them. That even enemies, and those that war against us, would be viewed in our sight the same way the Father views them and treats them.

After all, we were once enemies as well. *“But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.”* (Ephesians 2:13). But, in His love, *“God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”* (Romans 5:8). He didn’t wait until we were doing right and walking perfect and checking off all the right boxes and treating everyone fairly before He died for us. He did it while we were in our mess. He did it while we were sinners. He did it while we were enemies. Now, it’s our turn to show others, even those who may hurt us and be called our enemies, the love of God in us.

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TOPIC:

## “Love Your Enemies”

**Matthew 5:38-48**

**Please Answer the Review Questions Below**

1. **T or F.** We are justified in getting even with those who treat us wrong.
2. Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right \_\_\_\_\_, turn to him the other also (Mat. 5:39).  
**A. Arm      B. Leg      C. Hand      D. Cheek**
3. What were some of the scenarios Jesus listed where one can go beyond their “**Human Nature**” and not seek retaliation or revenge?

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4. What does it mean to “**Pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you**”?

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5. When the lesson talks about the “**Publicans**”, who is it referring to?

**A. Pharisees      B. Tax Collectors      C. Disciples      D. Enemies**

6. **T or F.** God makes it rain on the just and on the unjust.
7. The lesson reminds us, “**If ye love them which love you, what reward have ye** (Mat. 5:46). Thinking on how God loved us when we were still sinners, how can we show love to those who are unkind to us?”

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