

Summer With Jesus

Week 4 LIFE Group Study – Love Your Enemies

AUGUST 1-7

Checking In

Welcome everyone. Ask the group if they have met some new folks this summer that they could invite to join the group. Don't see your LIFE group as a "closed group but rather a group that is looking "outward" to involve more people in fellowship and study.

Memory Verse

"You have heard that it was said, Love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven."

Matthew 5:43

NOTE: THERE IS NO GROUP VIDEO FOR THIS SERIES

FACILITATION FOR THE GROUP LEADER

NOTE: *Use the following as a guide as you prepare to lead your group time. Use what is helpful for you to facilitate the discussion. Discovery questions and the group guide follow this material.*

Loving your enemies is one of the most outrageous teachings of Jesus. The religious leaders of the day had changed the view of treatment of people especially enemies. But the Hebrew people were known for their compassion. When their army would conquer another army they would feed them, bind up their wounds, and release them....

Paul said it this way....

But if your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink. For in so doing you will be heaping fiery coals on his head. Romans 12 :20

The religious leaders of the day had set a low bar of expectation to just love people like themselves. Jesus changes that. Listen to what he says....

“You have heard the law that says, ‘Love your neighbor’ and hate your enemy. But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike. If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that?

Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that. But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Matthew 5:43-48 NLT

This is the last in a set of six teachings where Jesus was addressing the need of a surrendered life. This final instruction is hard because it is easy to love those who love you but a person living “*all for Jesus*” lives a different kind of life.

How do we display this kind of love?

- Pray for those who persecute you.... prayer changes you and them.
- We all share the common struggles of life and community is built on love and compassion.
- Greet and show hospitality.
- Be mature as a believer...what does that mean.... connected, growing, serving, and sharing.

Discovery Questions

- How does Psalm 139:19-22 compare with what Jesus was teaching on the “Sermon on the Mount”? (Matthew 5:43-48)
- We can be complete in God yet have much room to grow. So, how can we be perfect...
in character, in holiness, in spiritual maturity?

- “Rights” are those preferences and freedoms we enjoy as Christians related to what we eat, drink, and enjoy and even some things that we are owed or deserve. So, how does this fit in... “Giving up rights = Gospel advancement”
- What does it mean to “show deference”? (Luke 10:27b). What are some examples of showing deference to your wife/husband, your friends, your enemies?

Putting It Into Practice

Show your “enemies” the genuine respect that every human being deserves. Learn to think of them with compassion.

Make every effort to come to know and understand them better – their hopes, their fears, concerns, and aspirations.

Wherever possible, show your enemies kindness. Do them as much good as you can. At least, sincerely wish them well.

Prayer Time

Last Sunday Pastor Scott quoted Mahatma Gandhi: “I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ.” Pray for us as individuals and as the body of Christ - that the world will know us by our love.

If your group knows the song “They’ll Know We Are Christians by Our Love” sing it together:

We are one in the Spirit; we are one in the Lord;
 We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord;
 And we pray that all unity will one day be restored.
 And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love,
 Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love.