

Love in Chaos

Session 5: Love Your Enemy

SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: We bear witness to the transforming love of Christ when we love our enemies.

Head Change: To know that God commands us to love the people we find difficult.

Heart Change: To feel encouraged to extend kindness, care, and concern to those who are hard to love.

Life Change: To take the initiative to love our enemies and reconcile with those from whom we're estranged.

OPEN

Which movie villain would be your worst enemy? Why? What about that character do you find so unappealing?

Most of us enjoy a good superhero movie. The battle between good and evil, the triumph of “the good guys” over their enemies—it seems that we can never get enough. Even in real life, the idea of defeating enemies can be enticing.

But for Christians, overcoming our “enemies” should be a foreign concept. Instead, God calls us to love our enemies, which can be very hard. In this session, Bob will show us the importance of loving those we might consider our enemies and the amazing things that can happen when we do.

VIEW

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Bob Goff’s teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

How did Kabi’s life change after he experienced love from his enemies?

For what reason does Jesus tell us to love our enemies?

Watch Session 5: *Love Your Enemy* (10 minutes).

Horizontal lines for note-taking.

REVIEW

Loving God, our neighbors, and our enemies are all relatively easy to talk about, but can be hard to actually do. **For what reasons do you find it difficult to love your neighbors? How much more difficult is it to love your enemies than your neighbors? Why?**

One thing that makes the task of loving enemies challenging is that we may not think we have enemies. Or we might just have too narrow a definition of what makes an enemy. **Without naming names, would you say you have enemies? What makes someone an enemy to you?**

How do you tend to treat your enemies, both in your mind and practically?

After coming to the legal aid of a kid in Uganda who had been the victim of a local witch doctor, Bob realized the witch doctor was his enemy. **Have you ever been face-to-face with an enemy of your own? What was that situation like? How did you react?**

After the witch doctor was sent to prison, Bob proceeded to pursue a friendship with him—this man whom he considered his enemy. **For what reasons did Bob befriend Kabi, the witch doctor? Do you think you would have done as Bob did? Why, or why not?**

Bob said that Kabi eventually came to Christ and began befriending his enemies. While not all stories about loving our enemies will end that way, loving our enemies can change them. It can also change us. **In what ways can obeying Jesus’s command to love our enemies affect them? In what ways can it change our hearts?**

One of the most powerful moments in this session was when Bob, as he was describing the school his team started for witch doctors, said, “Instead of pointing our fingers at people that did awful things, we decided to take the Scriptures literally and to say, ‘love your enemies.’” **When have you taken the Scriptures seriously and obeyed them? How did your life change? In what ways did your actions impact the people around you?**

As this session came to a close, Bob asked us a series of questions. “Who is it that’s prickly . . . [or] hard to love in your life. . . [or] disagreeable?” Without saying it out loud,

Horizontal lines for writing.

BIBLE EXPLORATION

The passage Bob spent most of his time on during this session is found in Matthew’s Gospel. It was one of Jesus’s most challenging teachings in the first century, and it remains challenging for us today. But if we want to obey his commands and model his love for others, loving our enemies is imperative. Read Matthew 5:43–48.

In verses 43–48, Jesus takes the idea we explored in the last session (loving our neighbors) and turns it up a notch, commanding his followers to love not just friends and loved ones but people who are hard to love—even enemies. **How do you react to Jesus’s words here? As a group, how would you describe how countercultural they are? What do you find most challenging about them?**

“Pray for those who persecute you.” What a challenging command! Praying for our enemies is an act of kindness—of blessing, even—for the people who malign and mistreat us. It’s something we naturally find difficult. **Have you ever personally experienced persecution? What was that experience like? Were you compelled to pray for your persecutor(s)? Why, or why not?**

Jesus equates loving our enemies with behaving like God’s children. While the connection he makes might suggest that we must obey this command to become one of God’s children, it’s more accurate to say we obey this command to mimic God—to be like him in the way we interact with others. **How is obeying to become a child of God different from obeying because you’re a child of God? How can you identify which is driving your obedience?**

In what ways does loving our enemy mimic God?

In verse 45, Jesus tells us that God extends love to those who have made themselves his enemy. God pours grace and love even upon those who are “evil” and “unrighteous.” **For what reasons is it good news that God extends love to those who are evil and unrighteous? What are some other ways God shows love to his enemies? In what ways did God show love to you when you were his enemy?**

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Jesus says that it's normal for people to love those who love them back—to show favoritism, even. But if we really want to follow the way of God, we'll go above and beyond, like he does, to extend love to people who don't love us back. **How do you show favoritism to the people who love you back? Why is it so much easier to love people we know will reciprocate our love?**

What's one thing you can do right now to love the “evil” and “unrighteous” the way God does?

LAST WORD

Loving our neighbors is often hard enough, but loving our enemies? That seems impossible. Nevertheless, that's what Jesus calls us to do. With God's help, we can extend God's love to those who are difficult and disagreeable. And when we do, we might be amazed at what can happen.

Take Bob's final encouragement in this session seriously this week: “Love your enemy. See what'll happen in your life. Give it a try.”

DEEPER WALK

Meditate: Take about fifteen minutes to read and meditate on Matthew 5:43–48. Read through the passage three or four times, considering and reflecting on each word. Consider how God might be prompting you to act based on these verses.

Pray: Ask God to give you the power to love your enemies. Set a calendar reminder that prompts you to pray for specific enemies by name every day.

Give It a Try: Be a doer of God's Word. Go out of your way to show kindness to the people you normally avoid or disregard. Make amends with the people from whom you're estranged—take the initiative. Forgive the people who've wronged you. Make it your ambition to love your enemies in a tangible, practical way.