

A REVIVAL OF LOVING YOUR ENEMIES IS COMING

(And How You Can Join It)



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STUDY GUIDE

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I. Loving Your Enemies—Thinking It Through (Lesson 1)

A. Questions for thought:

1. Does it ever bother you that people struggle to see the heart of God behind the story of our gospel? What are we doing about this, Church?
2. Is it right that more of the world is convinced we hate them than that we love them?
3. Should we be persecuted for our hate or for our love?
4. How do we use social media, as Christians, to put our best views forward?
5. Is it better to be ridiculed as active, engaged peacemakers to stop potential civil conflict in our country, or to *believe* we are peacemakers because we don't rock the boat, pray often, and mind our own business?
6. There is an entire segment of the Church with an openness to bring the next civil war to protect our rights. When are our rights more strategic to pursue than persecution which brings revival? In every chaotic moment is a plan from heaven, an opportunity for harvest!

B. Consider who your enemy might be:

1. A distant terrorist.
2. A distant political leader.
3. A local governor.
4. A teacher.

5. A boss.
6. A colleague.
7. A friend.
8. A family member.
9. You.

C. We are ALL enemies.

1. *“While we were still enemies, Christ reconciled us to the Father by His death.”* (Romans 5:10)
2. If Christ died for the ungodly (Romans 5:6), where ungodly equals “un-Godlike, different from God, pure outsiders”—then by His example, what kind of people should we be selfless toward?
3. Humanity is a race of enemies. None of us can consistently live up to our aspirations, even the best and kindest of us.
4. Jesus cherished me even when I was His enemy, and He is the way back to the good Father that every heart longs for.

D. How do you see this enemy?

1. The Brilliance, a liturgical soft rock band, has a song, “When I look into the face of my enemy, I see my brother.” How do you see the face of your enemy?
2. Recognize our own position as enemies before the cross, the race of enemies, God’s cherishing love of me while an enemy.
3. Jesus asks that we view our enemies as people already purchased by Him and who are, or may one day be, brothers and sisters in Christ.
4. “Who are the enemies of my calling and my internal peace?” Speak their names before God.
5. Be honest: “What did my enemies do to me or to those I love?”
6. PRAYER: *“God, show me the bigger purpose and give me meaningful hope so that I am not drowning in the cruelty of my enemies. I don’t want to die of bitterness of soul, so protect me from harboring offense. Make Your love and grace a refuge for my heart as I learn to love my enemies.”*

II. A Vision for Loving Enemies (Leviticus 26, Lesson 1)

A. Intro story—Pastor’s wife in Mexico, ordination:

“I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid. And I will remove harmful beasts from the land, and the sword shall not go through your land. You shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword. Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall chase ten thousand, and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword.

“I will turn to you and make you fruitful and multiply you and will confirm My covenant with you. You shall eat old store long kept, and you shall clear out the old to make way for the new. I will make My dwelling among you, and My soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be My people.” (Leviticus 26:6–12)

B. What is a New Testament lens for this passage?

1. Although this passage was written to Old Testament Israel, there is a New Testament lens through Jesus. Use the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:43–44: *“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy,’ but I say to you, ‘Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.’”*
2. Can you see where this overlays on Leviticus 26?

C. What does Love Your Enemy (LYE) mean in the context of the people of God?

1. What if instead of repenting for sin, we repented for sinners? I mean, if we stopped being so self-focused and became others-focused and owned their faults as our own?
2. What if we were known for painting big targets of love, prayer, and blessing on our enemies?
3. What if our enemies knew that we (Christians) pursued enemies with love?
4. What if our faith was big enough to believe for miracles of God’s love being revealed to enemies?

5. What if we focused on protecting enemies from hell instead of thinking they belong there?
- D. What if we looked like this?
1. We should be famous for loving our enemies, especially the most evil, unimaginably awful in our world.
 2. When the Church walks in true unity of love, even the small acts of deceit are a risk. Lying is a breach of trust between people. It was hard for any kind of betrayer to stand in the midst: *“When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last. And great fear came upon all who heard of it.”* (Acts 5:5)
 3. Consider Acts 5, the testimony of a radically committed Church, *“None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem.”* (Acts 5:13)

III. Perfect like Papa God (Lesson 5)

- A. *“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, ‘Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.”*
(Matthew 5:43–44)
- B. *“So that you may be ...”* Being a son is a formative process. We may have said a big YES to Jesus as Lord, but now we need a daily YES to be conformed to His glory as spiritual sons and daughters. It is a shaping process of becoming like our Papa.
- C. We have full family status as children of unmerited favor—grace. When we accept God’s grace and extend this same grace to others, we look more like the sons and daughters of God that we were redeemed to be.
- D. *“You therefore must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.”*
(Matthew 5:48)
 1. This is Jesus’ capstone statement about loving enemies. Your heavenly Father loves enemies, and He considers loving enemies a measure of perfection.

2. This is the pinnacle for all the Christian perfectionists out there. It is not easy, though. Loving enemies is messy. Rarely does loving look or feel perfect.
3. Loving an enemy is a journey that perfects us in love and proves our family ties with heaven, which ultimately brings us great joy and peace.
4. Luke's rendition in Luke 6:36 reads, "*Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful!*" Mercy is what we give enemies, and we reflect the perfect One when we give this mercy.
5. In the scriptures, the word for "perfect" is sometimes translated as "mature." The Aramaic word Jesus may have used when actually teaching this carries nuances of wholeness.

IV. First and Second Great Commandments (Lesson 5)

"Jesus answered, 'The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. 31 The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these.'" (Mark 12:29–31)

- A. Now we can begin to see how loving enemies is tied up in the first and second commandments:
 1. Loving God: Be perfect in loving enemies to enter this agape love.
 2. Loving neighbors: Love enemies like you love yourself.
- B. The triune counsel before creation: God's agape love for Himself and within Himself is a laid-down love for those that don't deserve it.
- C. The love language of God: If you want to love your neighbor well, you need to first know how to love your enemy. If you want to love God well, you have to walk out sacrificial love for enemies to align your heart to His love language.
- D. Love for enemies is not a natural kind of love:
 1. If we were to live out loving enemies "naturally," it would eventually only create more wars.

2. Either we would choose selfish ways to show love that created offense, or we would follow the “rules” of loving enemies and miss the heart of it.
- E. Loving enemies creates a perfect picture of who the Father is for the world He created.
1. We could call this perfect kind of love one of Jesus’ powerful strategies for societal transformation.
 2. Enemy-focused love is perfection from heaven. It is God’s big “I forgive you; I love you,” to everyone in the world through Jesus. In us, it is a divine encounter of love overflowing to others.

V. When a Broken Culture Betrays Us (Lesson 3)

- A. Example 1: Hagar is betrayed by Abraham (Genesis 13)
1. God is named, “*El Roi*—To see and therefore to care.” (Genesis 13:16)
 2. This wounding of Hagar was attached to a custom of *using* a personal handmaiden to get a child for yourself.
 3. Consider how you would feel if this custom was used today.
- B. Example 2: When Abraham is “betrayed” by God and has to sacrifice his son.
1. God is named “*Jehovah Yirra*—the Lord who sees and therefore provides.” (Genesis 22:13)
 2. Did you know that sacrificing the firstborn was common practice in the land of Canaan at this time?
 3. We kill (abort children) for convenience; they killed to gain honor.
 4. Consider that God used a very dark part of the Canaanite culture to reveal His goodness and His future sacrifice of love.
 - a. We can become prophets to our culture if we are not scared of the darkness in it.
 - b. We pray for a culture by asking God what His dream is for it. If that culture was following Him, what would it look like?

- c. **Wa** proverb: “Oh how beautiful is the site of the forked stick.”
- d. Paradox of dark culture.

C. God will use LYE to change Me and impact culture. (Lesson 4)

1. Loving enemies is first about God freeing my own heart and second about God bringing redemptive change to the circumstances that came from an enemy’s actions.
2. Prayer for enemies will change my own heart before it ever “considers” working on an enemy’s heart. Prayer is always about aligning our hearts to our Father’s.
3. **Story:** Suh the drug army leader.