

## 7th Grade New Testament (Gospels)

**Lesson Plan:** Loving Your Enemies (Matthew 5:43-48)

**Learning Goals:** Students should be able to differentiate between the world's definition of love and the self-sacrificing love (i.e. the love of enemy) that Jesus teaches and models.

**Opening Question:** How do you define love? What does it to love someone?

Prayer

Show video clip of "Awakening of Love: Why It Matters Where We Live"

### The Greatest Commandment (Matthew 22:36-40)

Jesus summed up all the law and prophets in two commands:

- Love God with everything you are (heart, soul, mind, strength)
- Love your neighbor as yourself

### Love is the centerpiece of Jesus' Ethic.

- Everything else is an extension of this command.
- This is also the pinnacle of the six antitheses and maybe the hardest one to actually live out.

### The Radical Love of the Kingdom (*Antithesis*)

- You have heard that it was said . . .
  - "Love your neighbor and hate your enemy." (*Jesus is quoting Leviticus 19:18 and adding an assumption of his time about hating your enemy.*)
- But I tell you . . .
  - "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you..."
  - What does it mean to **"love?"**

Definition of love in this context: "a rugged commitment to be with someone, to work for their good, and to help them become who God created them to be."

It is NOT a feeling.

It is NOT toleration.

It IS a commitment.

- There is a strong connection here to the idea of shalom.
 

Definition: peace; completeness, wholeness, prosperity, reconciliation, well being, and harmony.

*Love for one's enemy is the first step in bringing shalom.*
- What does Jesus mean by being "perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect?"
 

In this context, Jesus is talking about the perfect love of the Father. We are to love all (even our enemies) just as God loves all (even his enemies - see Romans 5:10)

Prejudicial love is no real love. Prejudicial love is really just another way of loving myself. (If I only love those who are like me, it is basically another way of saying that I love myself.)

### So what do we do?

- The first step in learning to love our enemies is to identify our enemies.
  - We must confess that we have enemies and be able to name who they are.
- The second step is working to make our enemies into neighbors - invite them into our homes, treat them as a neighbor, and love them as we love ourselves.

- As we turn enemies into neighbors, we are bringing God's shalom and God's kingdom "on earth as it is in heaven"

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**Lesson Summary /Review:**

Students should review and highlight the following vocabulary terms and concepts from this lesson in their notes:

- Shalom
- Finish this statement, "You have heard it was said love your neighbor and hate your enemy, but I tell you . . ."
- What the centerpiece of Jesus' entire sermon?