



B REVEALING WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

Love your enemies



Why use this Bible study?

This Bible study can help us explore the sometimes very difficult challenge of loving and forgiving people who do not love, or may even harm us, and balancing this with the biblical call for justice.



Love versus justice

It is often hard to show compassion to people we do not know or find difficult to relate to. It is even harder when we are hated, threatened or even attacked by people. The Bible's teaching on the issue of how to approach our enemies is quite clear.

Read Matthew 5:43-48. Jesus urges his listeners to love their enemies. He uses the example of God, who causes the sun to rise and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous alike. He is talking about unconditional love. The greatest demonstration of unconditional love is God's grace through Jesus Christ. He loves us despite our sin.

The passage ends with verse 48 encouraging us to seek perfection or completeness – an idea that is very close to the wholeness of shalom. Although we will never be perfect on this earth, we should try to follow God's example by showing grace to our enemies. This means reaching out to them with God's love despite their wrongs against others and against us.

It can be very challenging balancing this with other scriptures where God also clearly asks us to speak up against injustice and to seek justice for the oppressed.



Key points

- It is very easy to love and spend time with those who love us. The Bible calls us to both speak out against injustice but also to love people who do not love us, people who may even hate us.



Questions for discussion

- What does Jesus challenge us to do in verse 46?
- What does he also challenge us to do in verse 47?
- What implications does this have for our relationships with people who hurt us?
- How can we love people who do not love us, or even harm us, whilst also ensuring that people who abuse others are brought to justice?

Awareness-raising

Children & youth

Climate & environment

Conflict & peacebuilding

Corruption & governance

Disaster risk management

Discrimination & inclusion

Food & livelihoods

Gender & sexual violence

Health & HIV

Influencing decision-makers

Migration & trafficking

Water, sanitation & hygiene



Further study

Other passages to study include: Luke 6:27-36 and Romans 12:14-21.



Notes

This Bible study is based on one first published in Tearfund (2003) Roots 4: Peace-building within our communities http://tilz.tearfund.org/en/resources/publications/roots/peace-building_within_our_communities/

Related tools:

- A1 – Revealing conflict: information for facilitators [*A1: Conflict & peacebuilding-1*]
- B – Christ triumphs over conflict (Bible study) [*B: Conflict & peacebuilding-1*]
- B – Unity in Christ (Bible study) [*B: Conflict & peacebuilding-3*]
- C2 – Analysing conflict [*C2: Conflict & peacebuilding-1*]

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