

# Study Guide



## Matthew 5:43-48 – Active Love October 29, 2017

### Welcome (40 Minutes)

Be intentional to have authentic relationships...

### Worship (5 Minutes)

As the group transitions from of a time of fellowship to a time of intentional study of the word, it is important to facilitate that transition with a time of worship. This can look like praying together, singing songs together, or rejoicing in what the Lord has done throughout the week.

### Word (45 Minutes)

As we look at Jesus' five discourses in Matthew, we see Matthew and the other disciples "at the feet of Jesus." These teachings are in the context of Jesus' calling and equipping the twelve apostles to go and make disciples of all nations. In our nine months of studying Jesus' five discourses of Matthew we will be sitting at the feet of Jesus learning the ins-and-outs of being disciple-makers ourselves. Our prayer is that we will be challenged to understand that we were saved in order to be disciple-makers and that we will be inspired to sit at the feet of Jesus to be equipped for our calling to be disciple-makers.

For further study on this weeks study please check out the following pages...

## Action Step

This week wear the wristband stating "Love Your Enemies" and pray for opportunity to explain that Jesus' disciples are given new hearts to love (bless) even their enemies for Christ died for us while we were His enemies.

## Calendar

October 29th— Master Plan Meeting  
October 29th— [Fall Festival](#)  
October 29th— Baptism Training  
November 12th— Member's Meeting

## Welcome (40 Minutes)

As you fellowship with one another, please be intentional about sharing what the Lord is doing in your lives. Get to know one another and encourage one another. Are your conversations pointing one another toward Christ?

## Worship (5 Minutes)

If you are looking for a song to sing this week, here are the lyrics to "[We Will Not Be Shaken](#)":

For we trust in our God  
And through His unfailing love  
We will not be shaken,  
We will not be shaken,  
We will not be shaken  
*[x2]*

Though the battle rages  
We will stand in the fight  
Though the armies rise up against us on all sides  
We will not be shaken  
We will not be shaken  
We will not be shaken

For in the hour of our darkest day  
We will not tremble, we won't be afraid  
Hope is rising like the light of dawn  
Our God is for us He has overcome

For we trust in our God  
And through His unfailing love  
We will not be shaken,  
We will not be shaken,  
We will not be shaken  
*[x2]*

All those against Him will fall  
For our God is stronger  
He can do all things  
No higher name we can call  
For Jesus is greater  
We can do all things  
*[x2]*

We have come to the final antithesis in the Sermon on the Mount. Last week we examined Jesus's statement in Matthew 5:38-42 to not seek revenge and this week Jesus continues and says don't seek revenge but "love your enemies." These last two statements from Jesus are considered by some to be the highest point in Jesus's Sermon. They both consider the attitude of total love which Christ calls us to show towards "one who is evil" and "our enemies." Nowhere is the challenge of the Sermon greater. Nowhere is the distinctness of the Christian counter-culture more obvious. Nowhere is our need of the power of the Holy Spirit (whose fruit is love) more compelling. In Matthew 5:38-48 we find ourselves asking how can I be Christ-like to someone who has done evil toward me and how can I love my enemies.

In Matthew 5:43 we see the scribes and Pharisees again have twisted the meaning of the Old Testament teaching. The phrase Jesus uses that they have heard, "you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy," was never said in the Old Testament. Jesus corrects their misinterpretation. The scribes and Pharisees also narrowly defined "neighbor" in order to be free to hate anyone who is not technically a neighbor. "My neighbor," they argued, is one of my own people, a fellow Jew, my own kin, who belongs to my race and my religion. The law says nothing about strangers or enemies. So, since the command is to love only my neighbor, it must be taken as a permission, to hate my enemy. However, for them to also believe this they ignored what was said in other areas of scripture on how to treat strangers and that the stranger or sojourner are under the same law (Ex. 12:49; Ex. 23:4-5; Dt. 22:1-4). This is not God's will for His people. God's will is that His people be known by their love, even love for their enemies.

Instead, Jesus corrects their misinterpretation and says, "But I say, love your enemies" (Matt. 5:44-48). As Children of God, as disciples, our lives are to imitate God. This means that our love will imitate God's love which blesses the evil with the sun and the unjust with the rain. This type of love will make us radically different than the culture we live in. To love our enemies is to passionately desire that they will repent and believe, and be saved. Our love for our "neighbor," "our enemy," is expressed in our deeds, our words, and our prayers (Lk. 10:29-37; 6:27, 35). True love is practical, it is humble, and it is sacrificial. If our enemy is seeking our harm, we must seek his good because this is how God has treated us. It is "while we were enemies that Christ died for us to reconcile us to God (Rom. 5:10)." If we are to imitate God's love and he gave himself for his enemies, than we must give ourselves for our enemies. In verse 48, Jesus concludes, "you, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." This in context reveals that Christ does not expect Christians to become morally perfect in this life. The context shows that the 'perfection' he means relates to love, that perfect love of God which is shown even to those who do not return it. We are called to be perfect in love, that is, to love even our enemies with the inclusive love of God.

As we wrap up the end of chapter 5 what has become clear is the greater righteousness in which Christians are called to live. It is a deep inward righteousness of the heart where the Holy Spirit has written God's law. Christians have a hunger and thirst for righteousness. They hunger and thirst for it continuously and this righteousness will show others to whom we belong. We are not called to imitate the world but to imitate the Father. It is by this imitation in our lives that others start to see the counter culture of Christianity.

## Discussion - Read Matthew 5:43-48

1. Read Leviticus 19:17-18. Is “love your neighbor and hate your enemy” an accurate summary of this passage?
2. What is the purpose of Jesus’s admonition in Verse 44?
3. How does the Father’s treatment of the Just and the Unjust in verse 45 provide a template for our interaction with neighbors and enemies? Is this an absolute prescription or merely proverbial wisdom?
4. Verses 46 and 47 are a clear call for Christians to be different than the world. How do you think your co-workers would react if you lived according to Jesus’s call in this week’s passage?
5. Verse 48 calls our minds back to everything we’ve learned over the past weeks in Matthew 5. Christ has shown us that we are imperfect even when we think we’ve obeyed the letter of the law. This culminating statement calls us to something higher...perfection. How do Christians obtain this perfection? Read Romans 8:3-4
6. At the culmination of this section of Matthew, how do you feel challenged to be more Christlike? Please take time to record some challenges and some victories that you’ve experienced in your quest for Godliness over the course of our study in Matthew.
7. Make sure to grab a wristband from your Community Group leader and read the Action Step section below.

## Action Step

**We must never forget that we have been sent by the Son of God to make disciples who make disciples.** Each week we are giving you action steps to take. Jesus has sent you out to make disciples and it begins by learning God's Word and engaging people. **This week we want you to start to invest in others.** Grab a "Love Your Enemies" wristband and pray for opportunities to explain that Jesus' disciples are given new hearts to love (bless) even their enemies for Christ died for us while we were His enemies.

**Community Group Leaders**, please challenge every member of your group to put on a wristband and to wear it everyday until group next week. The purpose of this is to take an action step using these wristbands to start conversations to be salt and light in our community. Look forward to hearing about conversations next week in Community Group. Below are a few examples of conversations.

### Conversation Examples:

Question: "Hey, what is your wristband for?"

Answer: "Oh it is just something my church is doing."

Response: "Oh" (Person walks away)

PLEASE DON'T DO THIS. God is answering your prayer for conversations please be bold in your opportunities.

Question: "Hey, what is your wristband for?"

Answer: "It is something our church is doing to remind us of what Jesus has called us to. Our culture is so divided right now and culture says to "hate your enemies" but Jesus has called us to be different and "love our enemies." The only way I can do this is if God changes me and I realize that Christ loved me when I was his enemy. What do you think about that?"

## Walk (30 minutes)

After enjoying fellowship, worship, and time in God's word together, it is now time to pray together as a group and encourage one another in the faith. It is very easy for this portion of the group time to be consumed by the other portions. However, this segment of the group time is crucially important. It answers the question, how do we apply what we are learning in Matthew to our lives today?

Many groups have found that it is helpful to sometimes break up into a men's group and a women's group for the purpose of being able to be more transparent and honest as we encourage one another and keep one another accountable. I encourage you to try this in your groups.

In addition to praying for, and encouraging, one another, this portion of the group time should also be used for planning how your group can participate in God's work outside the walls of our church – "neighbors and nations." Discuss with your group some ideas on how you can be intentional with building relationships with your neighbors and co-workers. What can your Community Group do to impact the area around you?

Here is a list of local ministries Norris Ferry is actively involved in:

Hub/purchased  
Young life  
Heart of hope  
First priority  
Ark-la-Tex crisis pregnancy center  
Community renewal  
Grief counseling  
Celebrate recovery  
Samaritan counseling  
Last call ministries  
Golden age ministries  
Rescue mission  
Luke's lighthouse  
FCA

May the Lord bless and encourage you as you are in your groups this week! Know that we are praying for you on a weekly basis and that we are here to help you in any way that we can!

## Walk Prayer & Missions

For further information visit  
[norrisferrychurch.org](http://norrisferrychurch.org) or contact Jared  
Clary ([clary@norrisferrychurch.org](mailto:clary@norrisferrychurch.org))

## Calendar

November— South Sudan  
February 22nd- March 3rd — South Sudan  
March 29th- April 1st— NOLA  
June— Serve Shreveport  
July— Central America