



STUDY GUIDE

May 12, 2024

Message Series:

You've Heard it Said

Message Title:

Praying for Your Enemies

Teaching Pastor:

Brian Hughes

Warm-up/Icebreaker: (10 min.)

What saying did you grow up hearing your parents repeat? Do you now share it too?
Or share one high and one low from the past week.

Pray:

Heavenly Father, we praise You for Who You are, the Author of love and of life. We ask that You clear our hearts and minds of all the noises and distractions so that we can hear clearly from You. Impress the truth from Your Word on our hearts and let it change us from the inside out. Guide this conversation in a way that is pleasing to You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Get Started: (20 min.)

"This series... "You've Heard it Said," is not about what we get or what Jesus did...it's about how we are to live. It's about choosing the road less traveled. It's completely counter-cultural, then and now. It has left us scratching our heads and doing double takes on intimate, life changing, deeply entrenched norms and values and beliefs and behaviors. Jesus has challenged us on anger, self-defense, sex and what it means to be faithful, commitment and integrity. All those words are easy on the surface but much harder when we dove into them." -Pastor Brian Hughes

- What is your reaction to the sermon on the mount and this series' teachings from PCC?

Read Matthew 5:43-48.

- Share your definitions of "enemy."
- Would you say that you have enemies in your life? People who have hurt you, maybe even continue to hurt you? Love and prayer would be the last things you think of when considering them. (Be careful not to share names.) How does this impact your life?
- What has been your experience with loving your enemies? Or is this a new concept for you?

"The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love. Maybe it's our human nature to hold love and hate in balance. We're certainly good at it. It feels natural to hate those who hurt you, take something from you. Those who want harm to come to you. And we think we can do both - hate and love, and keep our faith intact. So, some among us might say that "Faith is the only thing that counts." Now let's be honest, you'd be in a challenging position to actually SAY that love isn't a part of faith. So, if pushed, you'd tag it on to the sentence. But for some people, the way you live and talk really removes love from the equation." -Pastor Brian Hughes

Watch and Discuss Video: (Running time 9:30 min./15 min. discussion)

Book suggestion by Pastor Brian:

Practicing the Way: Be with Jesus. Become Like Him. Do as He Did. -John Mark Comer

Pastor Brian recapped the series, Jesus' most famous sermon, **Matthew 5-7:**

Letting Go of Anger

Lust/How to have Faithful Relationships

Divorce/Raising the Value of Marriage

Your Word/A Simple Yes or No

Retaliation/Going the Extra Mile

Loving and Praying for Your Enemies

- Which message in this series do you feel like God would like for you to work on right now? Explain if comfortable.

Reflect and Commit: (15 min.)

Read Romans 5:6-11.

- How does this passage shift your perspective and your approach to your enemies?

Read 1 Peter 3:9.

- At church on Sunday Brian gave the following challenge...consider doing this important exercise again.

"In the spirit of Jesus' tough teaching today, I'm going to ask you to close your eyes. This is going to mess you up. It's going to be super hard. I'm asking you to trust me...trust Jesus' teachings. OK...Imagine... Your abuser. The one who harmed you. The one who took advantage of you. The leader of the other party. The other candidate. The one who sees the world in an entirely opposite way and is hoping to order the world that way. The one who brought you pain. Imagine that person...do you see their face? Keep your eyes closed. Keep looking at them. Imagine singing this song to them. (Play "The Blessing" by Cody Carnes)
I said it would be hard. But the exercise we just did - the one you hated...that is EXACTLY what Jesus is teaching here. You want to be like Jesus? You don't just think like Jesus and act like Jesus; you PRAY like Jesus. For your friends, yes. AND for your enemies."

Gather prayer requests and pray. (5-10 min.)

Pray:

Lord, You are the only one who can help us love the way we are called to love. In our humanness, we find it almost impossible to forgive and love our enemies. From the cross, Jesus cried out for You Lord to forgive those who crucified Him. Help us to pray forgiveness over our persecutors too. We have pent up hurt, anger and even hatred. We bury it within, but it's really buried alive. Only You can help us to bring it to the surface so that You can shine Your light on the darkness. Turn our bitterness into something beautiful. Fill our hearts with peace as we pray blessings over all, no matter what. May we truly live a life with a faith expressing itself through love, the only thing that counts. In Jesus' name. Amen.