

## Small Groups Guide

Luke 15:11-24

Sunday June 25, 2023

1. Short opening prayer (one person or popcorn style prayer)
2. Group sharing time (time for everyone to talk about what is going on and how they are)
3. Go over sermon.
  - a. Question for discussion: what does Jesus mean when he says to love your enemy as we read last week?
  - b. That is what we're looking into with more depth this week: what loving our enemies looks like on a daily basis.
    - i. For example, I have learned that loving my enemies means that I still be friends with people that I don't agree with politically. This is called practical theology. Theology just says, "Love your enemy." Practical theology says, "Have dinner with people who have been unkind to you in the past." Today, you will all become practical theologians.
  - c. See if anyone can remember the sermon off the top of their head and how they'd summarize it.
  - d. Summary from PM: For June 25<sup>th</sup> continued our sermon series on dealing with difficult people. We dug further into how we deal with difficult people daily. We also read about some of the ways that Jesus dealt with difficult people. From those readings, we realize that Jesus didn't handle all types of difficult people the same. He took a different approach for each one. We probably need to do the same thing with the difficult people in our lives. Near the end of the sermon, we talked about the reality that we must have attitudes of humility and forgiveness before we can truly love our enemy the way Jesus commanded us to. At the closing, we discussed that God doesn't see people the way we see them. We often see them as difficult all the while God sees them as a work in progress. We need to learn to see people the way God does, and they will help us greatly in dealing with difficult people (again this requires humility).
  - e. What did you think about the first sermon about the seriousness of Jesus' command to love our enemy?
  - f. Do you think Jesus meant for us to love every single enemy we have or just the people who get on our nerves (those low-level enemies)?
  - g. Can you think of some biblical characters who were an enemy or real nuisance to someone else? Examples below if no one can think of any.
    - i. The serpent to Eve.
    - ii. Cain and Abel.
    - iii. Jacob and Esau.
    - iv. Jacob and Laban.
    - v. Sarah and Hagar.
    - vi. David and his son Absalom.
    - vii. Peninnah and Hanah.
    - viii. Elijah and the queen.
    - ix. Just about all the kings of Judah and Israel.
    - x. Jesus and his disciples (he often got frustrated with them).
    - xi. Jesus and the Pharisees.
    - xii. Jesus and the Sadducees.
    - xiii. Jesus and Judas.

- h. (If you've heard the sermon yet) do you remember from the sermon or your own reading of the scriptures how Jesus dealt with difficult people?
  - i. He ate with the sinners of the day ... the prostitutes and the tax collectors.
  - ii. He dealt with other difficult people by getting frustrated.
  - iii. Some difficult people (the pharisees) he cursed at them calling them a brood of vipers and casting woes at them.
  - iv. At other times, when people were taking advantage of the temple, he got hot-tempered and drove them all out with a whip while flipping tables over.
  - v. When on trial with difficult leaders he mostly remained silent.
  - vi. When a sinful man hung on a cross beside him, Jesus didn't chastise him for his mistakes ... instead he offered him an invitation to paradise.
  - vii. Can you think of more that I don't have listed?
- i. Do you think that all the ways Jesus dealt with enemies was loving? How so?
- j. Go around individually and talk about someone who is an enemy or just difficult to you?
- k. How do you deal with those people?
- l. Often, we just don't deal with enemies. We avoid them. So, we're going to practice what Jesus preached. Take a scrap of paper and write down the name of that person if you are comfortable sharing it with the group. Feel free to write two or three names. When everyone has turned their paper in, someone take the papers and prays for each person. Say their name and some sentence about them. Often a short moment of silence, then move on. This is how we begin dealing with difficult people: praying for them.
- m. Take your scrap of paper back home and put it in your Bible or your refrigerator ... wherever you'll see it to pray for them daily. I know this could be intensely painful but it is the road to healing.
- n. Also read:
  - i. Proverbs 12:16
  - ii. Proverbs 20:3
  - iii. Proverbs 10:12
  - iv. Proverbs 22:24

#### 4. Closing prayer

## Youth Group Guide

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1. Short opening prayer (one person or popcorn style prayer)
2. Group sharing time (time for everyone to talk about what is going on and how they are)
3. Go over sermon.
  - a. Sermon summary: For June 25th continued our sermon series on dealing with difficult people. We dug further into how we deal with difficult people daily. We also read about some of the ways that Jesus dealt with difficult people. From those readings, we realize that Jesus didn't handle all types of difficult people the same. He took a different approach for each one. We probably need to do the same thing with the difficult people in our lives. Near the end of the sermon, we talked about the reality that we must have attitudes of humility and forgiveness before we can truly love our enemy the way Jesus commanded us to. At the closing, we discussed that God doesn't see people the way we see them. We often see them as difficult all the while God sees them as a work in progress. We need to learn to see people the way God does, and they will help us greatly in dealing with difficult people (again this requires humility).
  - b. Who are some people you really don't like? Give some real everyday examples of what they do that makes you not like them. For example, I have one person I don't like because she is always negative about everything I try to do.
  - c. Why do you feel this way about those people?
  - d. How do you respond to their unkindness?
    - i. Ex: Some people ignore them, yell at them, get revenge, gossip about them, etc.
  - e. How do you think God wants you to treat those people?
  - f. Summarize story of lost or prodigal son from Luke 15:11–24. In this story the son messed up real bad and really hurt his father. But when he came back home the father completely forgave him and welcomed back home. He did that out of love even though their relationship was torn to parts and they should have been enemies.
  - g. That story reminds us that if forgive people we can find ways to love them.
  - h. What does this mean for your everyday life?
    - i. You don't have to let people treat you badly just because you love them.
    - ii. You don't even have to talk to someone just because you love them.
    - iii. It might mean something simple like praying for them.
    - iv. The way you deal with every difficult person might be difficult. Ask God for help in knowing what to do.
  - i. Exercise: Everyone take a scrap of paper and write the name of one person on it that you don't like (that you don't mind the rest of the group knowing about). Give the pieces of paper to one person who will read each name and pray for them. Then take your piece of paper back home and put it somewhere you'll be reminded this week to pray for that person.
4. Prayer