

BIG IDEA

If we won't trust Jesus as a practical teacher, we can't trust Him as a spiritual savior.

WHAT DOES GOD WANT ME TO KNOW?

Have you ever had an experience where God changed your heart toward someone that you used to see as an enemy? What did you learn?

Read Acts 9:1-31. What evidence of enemy-love can you find in this story? Who are the peacemakers? Who do you identify with most in this account?

The story of Saul's conversion is a wonderful demonstration of what God can do when we choose to love our enemies. Believers at this time would have been justified in their fears of Saul—he was an active persecutor of their faith- but **Ananias and Barnabas** lived out the call of Jesus to love enemies. If we are being honest, many of us would probably relate most to the believers who were hesitant to accept Saul into their community based on his not-so-distant past.

Why does God want us to love our enemies? Why can't we just stay away from our enemies?

God had selected Saul as his chosen instrument while he was still considered an enemy to the believing community. It seems that God has a tendency to work through people that we are afraid of or are indifferent to! When we decide to stay away from those who oppose us, we miss out on opportunities to see God at work. It is also important to note that it is impossible to really love someone with whom we never come in contact. According to the example we have in Jesus, love is an action, not a feeling.

Read Matthew 5:43-45 and 1 John 3:23-24. What similarities do you see in these two passages? How are these passages related to this week's big idea?

Loving others is at the center of each of these passages. 1 John links the ideas of believing in Jesus and loving others. You can't do one without the other! This is exactly what our big idea is about this week.

WHAT IS MY INITIAL REACTION?

Respond to the following quote from this weekend's message:

You can decide to treat people as your enemy, but Jesus won't do it with you.

Read 2 Peter 3:8-9. Is there anyone that you wouldn't want to see in heaven? Why is your heart toward this person different than God's heart toward them?



Is there anyone that would consider you an enemy because of something you believe?
How is Jesus calling you to respond?

WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?

Listen quietly as your Life Group Leader (or a volunteer) reads **John 14:1-21** aloud a few times. Journal your answers to the following questions as you listen to the word of God:

What parts of the passage catch your attention? What words, phrases, or images do you hear as though for the first time?

Why do you feel drawn to these phrases or images?

What does God want you to know? What does God want you to do?

Many times we feel unable to love our enemies because we are legitimately afraid of the harm they could bring to us and the ones we love. John 14 is a beautiful passage to read in light of this truth because it is filled with comforting words of Jesus. Processing through the passage using the strategy above will give your group members a chance to hear the words of Jesus in a unique way. If you can, read through the passage aloud a few times before your group meets. The more familiar you are with the reading, the smoother this prayer activity will go.

One name for this approach to scripture is *Lectio Divina*, which simply means divine reading. This practice of praying through Scripture has been used in the church from as early as the third century!! If you would like to learn more about how to lead your group in this practice, you can check out the link below:

<https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/scripture-engagement/lectio-divina/small-groups>

