

HOPE

A Good Place to Find Life

Small Group Discussion Guide — MARCH 1, 2026

- Series: Seek Peace and Pursue It
 - Sermon: No Offense
 - Scripture: Matthew 5:43-48
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CONNECT

What made you laugh recently? Like a real, deep belly laugh.

FOLLOW-UP FROM LAST WEEK

Last week, we talked about examining our hearts and the cost of following Jesus. As you reflected this week, what did you notice rising up in you? (bitterness, defensiveness or fear) Did you become more aware of when those feelings tend to surface? Did you find opportunities to respond differently? (Humility, resilience or joy) If comfortable, share your experience.

ENGAGE

1. Read verse 43-44 Why do you think Jesus begins with prayer when talking about loving our enemies? What does that reveal about where real change starts?
2. Read verse 45 Why do you think Jesus points to God causing the sun to rise and the rain to fall on both the righteous and the unrighteous? What does that reveal about God's character? How should that shape the way we view and treat others?
3. Read verses 46-48 Why do you think Jesus raises the standard from loving those who love us to "be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect"? What is He inviting us into here?

APPLY

1. Pete reminded us that God is calling us to a deeper way of living - one marked by His incomparable power at work within us. What would it look like in your everyday life if you truly believed that God's supernatural power is already in you? How would you forgive, love, believe in God and seek peace and pursuit? Where do you find yourself relying more on your own strength than on God's power?
2. In the Old Testament, many interpreted the law as "Love your neighbor and hate your enemy," and we often do the same today in how we treat those who oppose us. What similarities do you see between their mindset and ours? And how does remembering that God loved and forgave us when we were

His enemies by grace reshape the way we're called to love like Jesus? How do we balance justice and mercy?

3. Pete reminded us that it's not "me in me, but Christ in me" - How does remembering that truth give us the power to break culture ways by loving our enemies and praying for those who persecute us? If we find ourselves forgiving little, what might that reveal about how deeply we understand the forgiveness and grace we've received from God? How does living from Christ in us lead to peace on the inside - and how does that inner peace overflow into peace on the outside in our relationships?

GOING DEEPER

Who is one or two people you would honestly consider an "enemy" - someone who has hurt you, opposed you, or is difficult to love? Write their names down and begin intentionally praying for them this week. As you do, pay attention to what changes - in your heart, your attitude, your responses. If we can love our enemies, if we can live in this counter-cultural way, we can begin to experience God in an especially intimate way. We will become close as sons and daughter of God.

PRAYER

Lord, we come before You humbled by the truth that we are sinners - and apart from Your grace, we still fall short. Yet in Your mercy, You loved us, pursued us, and forgave us. Lord, we ask that You help us to recognize the supernatural power You have placed within us through Christ. Teach us to depend on that power - not our own strength - to love when it is hard, to forgive when it costs us and to live in a way that reflects You. May our lives reveal that it is not us in us, but Christ in us.

SCRIPTURE

2 Corinthians 5:13

Micah 5:8, 6:8

Luke 7: 41-47

Romans 5:10, 12:21

QUOTES

"Let your heart be troubled" Would you shrug your shoulders and say, "But Lord, the well is too deep, and You can't draw up quietness and comfort out of it." Actually that is correct. Jesus doesn't bring anything up from the wells of human nature - He brings them down from above. We impoverish and weaken his ministry in us the moment we forget He is almighty."

Oswald Chambers

"Surprisingly, in what science calls nature and the church calls creation. Jesus sees God's love for enemies. Hence, Jesus command is not asking disciples to do anything himself is not doing daily and doing in great profusion through the millennia

Dale Bunner

