

# Group Discussion Guide for Week of 3/27/2023

Riverside Home Group Discussion Guide

Scripture Text to accompany the themes of the Sunday Sermon; *Matthew 5:43-48 (NIV)*

<sup>43</sup> “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ <sup>44</sup> But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, <sup>45</sup> that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. <sup>46</sup> If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? <sup>47</sup> And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? <sup>48</sup> Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

## General Question Bank

**Observation** (what does the text say?) **Interpretation** (what does it mean?) **Application** (what does it mean to me/us?)  
**Know** (what does the text say about God?) **Be** (what does it say about us?) **Do** (what does it call us to do?)  
**Together** (What is our communal identity/response according to the passage/Holy Spirit?)

## Discussion/Topic Starter (Ice Breaker)

- Is it a bad thing to have enemies? Why or why not?

## Matthew 5:43-48

O: What things in the text strike you or jump out at you? Why?

*\*\*\*Another way to ask: “Choose one verse or phrase from the passage that stands out to you. This could be something you’re intrigued by, something that makes you uncomfortable, something that puzzles you, something that resonates with you, or just something you want to examine further.” Now share it with the group*

- I: Leviticus 19:18 commands Israel to love their neighbor and “not hate a fellow Israelite.” How might “do not hate a fellow Israelite” eventually become “hate your enemy”? (or, how do we get from “I can’t hate Israelites” to “but...I can hate other types of people, right?”)
- O: According to Jesus, how are we to treat our enemies and why (vs. 44-45)?
- I: vs. 44b, beginning with “He causes his sun...” is often considered in theoretical conversations of “why bad things happen to good people,” but in this context, it’s calling us to live like our Father in heaven. Consider what it’s asking of us and how this passage might be connected to Matthew 5:14-16.
- I: vs. 45 and 46 both refer in some way to rewards from God. Does God command us to behave from altruism or some other motive? Does that challenge your assumptions about motives?
- I: v. 48 communicates a similar sentiment to Matthew 5:20. What does “perfection” look like in the Kingdom of God, and why would Jesus bring it up in the context of loving our enemies of all things?
- A: If you’re able to identify any person or persons who are enemies or persecuting you, pray for them specifically and often. What would it look like to pray for and love them regardless of outcome? Keep praying, friends!

-How WILL you respond this week? What one question do you want us to ask of you next week in regard to this?

## Recommended Follow-up:

**Pray:** Pray together, and really focus in on that we are meeting with God, He’s in the room, and He wants us to KNOW Him. Pray together, spend some time being silent.

**Respond:** Spend this week responding to God’s word as fleshed out in the group time, as well as journey through this week’s devotional guide.

## An explanation on how Riverside structures these discussion guides\*:

Riverside defines a disciple of Jesus as a **“Know, Be, Do”** person. And since Jesus told us to “make disciples” we use the “Know, Be, Do” framework in our discussion guides. We believe the process for this transformation happens in community, hence the **“Together”** part of the Riverside mission as well.

Riverside leadership regularly asks questions around these areas:

- “What do we need to **know** about God?”
- “Who do we need to **be**?”
- “What do we need to **do**?”
- **“Together**, what is our communal identity/response according to the passage/Holy Spirit?”

Here is what we mean by “Know, Be, Do” (based on [Colossians 1:9-10](#), see below)

**Know** – *“to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives..., growing in the knowledge of God.”* Not just knowing about Jesus, but knowing Him personally, intimately, and deeply. This is also about knowing the scriptures, knowing the voice of the Holy Spirit, even knowing yourself.

**Be** – *“so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way.”* Becoming more like Jesus (sanctification). This is about our character and our heart and our motivations, our passions and convictions change the more we get to Know Jesus (and others).

**Do** – *“bearing fruit in every good work, ...”* Knowing Jesus and Becoming like Jesus practically will change our actions. As we grow in these areas we will naturally DO the things that Jesus did while in the flesh on earth (living and loving like Jesus). Some broad categories around DO are evangelism and justice and service.

Notice *“bearing fruit in every good work”* then yields more *“growing in the knowledge of God.”* In other words, while “Know, Be, Do” are three distinct words, they are deeply interconnected.

As a side note, the next chapter states: *“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, <sup>7</sup>rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. <sup>8</sup>See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ. (Col. 2:6-8)*  
To aid in this process Riverside also has a **daily devotional guide available each week**.

### Colossians 1:9-10, NIV

*For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,...*

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\* As discussed in Riverside’s HGLT (Home Group Leader Training), these guides are to be starting points for home group leaders to develop their own guides and approaches to leading group discussions. This is a resource tool, not a rigid “go through this guide word-for-word.” There are intentionally too many questions for a single home group time. This guide was created in consultation with *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, Jonathan Pennington, 2017; *Sermon on the Mount: LifeGuide Bible Studies*, John Stott; *Matthew for Everyone Bible Study Guide*, N. T. Wright; and *The Story of God Bible Commentary: Sermon on the Mount*, Scot McKnight; *Sermon on the Mount*, Amy-Jill Levine; *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, 2020; *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, David Martin Lloyd-Jones, 2011.