



FEBRUARY THEME

PLAYLIST

Put Love into the Mix

BIBLE STORY

Matthew 5:43-47

Never Gonna Give You Up | Love Your Enemies

Spark Story Bible, pg. 274-275
Love Your Enemies

BOTTOM LINE

Love others because they matter to God

MEMORY VERSE

“Here is my command. Love one another, just as I have loved you”
John 15:12, NIV

LIFE APP

Love | Choosing to treat others the way you want to be treated

BASIC TRUTH

I should treat others the way I want to be treated

FOR LEADERS ONLY

GOD VIEW: the connection between **LOVE** and God’s character, as shown through God’s big story.

Key Question: When is it hard to love others? Loving others won’t always be easy. We are often very aware that there are people we don’t get along with or who don’t get along with us. We hope to start thinking about those moments when it’s more difficult to show love. When we’re aware of those moments, we can pray about a better response than the one in our head. Hopefully, we’ll choose to show love.

Jesus brought his followers to a mountain to explain to them what it means to live as part of God’s kingdom. During that message, he said something surprising about love. In **Matthew 5:43-47** Jesus said, “You’ve heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor. Hate your enemy.’ But here is what I tell you. Love your enemies. Pray for those who hurt you” (NIV). Jesus wanted us to know that love is bigger than we think, and every one deserves love.

Bottom Line: Love others because they matter to God. We tend to make judgement calls on who deserves to receive love. But that’s not the way God works. All people are created in God’s image, and regardless of how much we get along or not, we should work to be kind and show God’s love to them. We’ll seek to help families understand how they can do this for the people in our lives.

SOCIAL: PROVIDING TIME FOR FUN INTERACTION

Welcome kids and spend time engaging in conversation and catching up. Get ready to experience today’s story.

Before kids arrive, **PRAY** for each group member by name. Ask God to help your kids see each person they meet as someone who was made by God intentionally, and in God’s very image. Pray that your group will be inspired by Jesus’ example to treat everyone with love and respect, especially those they find challenging to get along with.

•• JUST FOR FUN

Made to Connect | An activity that invites kids to share with others and build on their understanding

What You Need: Index cards, pens

What You Do:

- Give each kid an index card and ask them to write the name of either a villain or a hero.
- Kids will take turns sharing what they wrote, and the group will try to guess the name of the character’s opposite.
- To get kids’ thinking going, some example character pairs might include:

—Superman and Lex Luthor	—Dora the Explorer and Swiper
—Luke Skywalker and Darth Vader	—Batman and Joker
—Harry Potter and Lord Voldemort	—Princess Anna and Prince Hans



●● GET YOUR HEAD IN THE GAME

Made to Play | An activity that encourages learning through following guidelines and working as a group

What You Need: 2 sets of “Pairs of Opposites” cards

What You Do:

- Divide your group into two teams.
- Give each team a set of “Pairs of Opposites” cards, asking them not to look at what’s written on the cards.
- Direct teams to place the cards face down in two even rows.
- Explain that the cards contain words that are opposites, and kids will be playing a matching game with the cards.
- Tell kids to take turns flipping over two random cards.
 - If the words on the cards are opposites, that player keeps the cards.
 - If they aren’t, he turns them back over and it is the next player’s turn.
 - The first team to get all the cards matched is the winner.

If you have a more active group, consider this alternate game:

- Give each kid one of the “Pairs of Opposites” cards, making sure all cards given have an opposite. *(If you have an odd number of kids today, you will need to play this game).*
- Ask kids to not say or show what is written on their card.
- At the same time, everyone will each act out what is on their card as they watch the rest of the group to find their “match” *(the kid who is doing the opposite of their own action).*
- When pairs find their “match,” they should stand together with their arms linked.

What You Say: “When we follow Jesus, there will be times when he asks us to do the opposite of what our natural response might be. For example, Jesus will tell us to be joyful even in hard times or to put others first instead of ourselves. Living for Jesus sometimes means doing the opposite of what we feel like doing. **[Transition] Today in Sunday CM worship/WOW family worship, we’re going to learn/we learned about something God helps us do that’s the opposite of what we might normally want to do.”**

[Sunday Leaders: Lead your group to Fellowship Hall for Children’s Ministry worship. Wednesday Leaders: Continue with the study.]

GROUPS: CREATING A SAFE PLACE TO CONNECT

Create a safe place to connect and learn how the Bible story applies to real life experiences, through interactive activities and discussion questions.

●● TAKE A SNAPSHOT [Talk about God | Application Activity]

Made to Imagine | An activity that promotes empathy and facilitates biblical application through role-play and reenactment

What You Need: Index cards, pens

What You Do:

- Divide your group into two teams.
- Ask Team One to write down 10 things that people do that make them hard to love, one example on each index card.
 - For example, they cut in front of you in the lunch line.
- Ask Team Two to write down 10 things people do that show love, one thing on each index card.
 - For example, giving somebody a hug.
- Invite someone from Team One to read one of their cards.
- Ask Team Two to share an action described on one of their cards that might be a helpful or loving way to respond in that situation.
 - If none of their cards fit the situation Team One described, brainstorm as a group what a loving response might be.
- Continue in the same manner by having Team One read a card and Team Two respond with ideas written on their cards.



- Encourage kids to share experiences they have had in which a loving response has diffused a tense situation or helped turn an enemy into a friend.

What You Say: “Throughout our lives, we will encounter lots of situations in which we are teased, annoyed, or treated unfairly by someone. As a follower of Jesus, we can (*and SHOULD*) respond differently from those who don’t know Jesus. When we come face to face with those who are hard to love, it’s an opportunity to remember that every person matters to God. God doesn’t hold back love from people who treat others badly or give love only to people who are nice. God made each of us in God’s image, and that means we matter to God. God’s plan is to help each person come to know, love, and follow Jesus. When you show love to an enemy, you’re reaching out to them the way God does.”

•• **BIBLE STORY EXTENSION** [Talk About God | Bible Story Review | Application Activity]

Made to Play | An activity that encourages learning through following guidelines and working as a group

What You Need: Ball-pit ball, “You Decide Scenarios” activity page, plastic cup, masking tape

What You Do:

- Take a moment to talk about and help kids define the word “enemy.”
—An enemy can be someone who’s not very nice to you or other people.
—It can be someone you just don’t get along with.
- Use the tape to mark a starting line.
- Place your large bin about five feet away from the starting line. Tell kids that the large bin is the “Family” bucket.
- Place your small bin next to the large bin. Tell kids that the small bin is the “Friends” bucket.
- Set the plastic cup about 10 feet from the starting line. Tell kids that the cup is the “Enemies” bucket.
- Give one group member the ball-pit ball. Ask him/her to stand behind the line.
- Tell the kids that you will be reading different scenarios, each of which fit into one of the three categories: family, friends, or enemies.
- Instruct them to toss the ball-pit ball in the corresponding bucket after you are finished reading each scenario.
- After kids toss the ball, give them time to retrieve the ball and hand it to another group member before you read the next scenario.
- Encourage kids to show love to each other by making sure they rotate who gets to throw the ball each time.

What You Say: “It was pretty easy to toss the ball into the first two buckets but harder to get it into the last one—the ‘enemies’ bucket. It’s the same with loving people. It often can be easy for us to love our friends and family but much harder to show love to those who aren’t often nice to us or people we just don’t get along with.

“There are times when someone is mean to us and we just want to be mean back. But Jesus showed love to those who weren’t nice to him, and he wants us to do the same. It doesn’t matter if someone ‘deserves’ our love or not. What matters is that each and every person you meet was made by God and matters to God.

[Make It Personal] (Share a time when someone wronged you and you chose to show kindness instead of reacting poorly. Share how difficult it was to do the opposite of what you really wanted to do. Also, share how it impacted the other person.) “Unkind people matter to God, just like kind people matter to God. **[Bottom Line] Love others because they matter to God.**”

•• **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS** [Live for God | Application Activity]

Made to Connect | An activity that invites kids to share with others and build on their understanding

What You Need: No supplies needed

What You Do:

- Ask some of the following questions...
—Loving an enemy isn’t easy. Why is it worth the effort?
—Why do you think every person matters to God?
—Jesus showed love to everyone, but He still had enemies. What can we learn from His example?



—What should you do if you are being bullied? What about if you see someone else being bullied?

—If you can't stop someone from being unkind to you, what should you do? How do you love that person without letting them continue to hurt you?

• **NOTE:** Remind kids they are made in the image of God. They matter to God. God doesn't want them to be hurt or be treated poorly by others. If they are being harmed in any way, encourage them to share their hurts with a trusted adult. Consult with Family Ministry staff about any situation that you feel needs to be addressed.

•• **VERSE TO TAKE WITH YOU** [Hear from God | Memory Verse Activity]

Made to Connect | An activity that invites kids to share with others and build on their understanding

What You Need: Bible

What You Do:

- Break your group into teams of two or three.
- Assign one of the following verses to each team:
 - Matthew 5:44 —Luke 6:28 —Proverbs 15:1
 - Ephesians 4:32 —Matthew 7:12
- Invite teams to look up their verse and set it to music. They can make up a tune, use a tune they know, or rap the words.
- When all teams are ready, have them perform their verse to the whole group.
- After each performance, discuss the verse using the following questions:
 - How does this verse suggest that we act, in terms of the way you should react to a person or situation that makes you angry?
 - How might showing love to an enemy keep a tense situation from exploding into a fight or argument?
- Encourage kids to choose the verse that helps them best understand how Jesus wants them to respond to an enemy. Read the verses again if needed.
- Challenge kids to memorize their chosen verse and remember it every time they are faced with an opportunity to show love in a difficult circumstance.

PRAY AND SEND

Bring your time to a close with prayer and encouragement to live out in your daily lives what you've experienced and learned in your time together

Made to Reflect | An activity that creates space for personal understanding and application

What You Need: Bible, CD inserts

What You Do:

- Set out the CD case inserts face down in the middle of the circle.
- Invite the kids to choose one, then read what is written on the front and pray silently.
- Provide as much time as needed for kids to pray.
- Ask kids to indicate they are done praying by placing their CD case insert back in middle of the circle.
- Lead the group in a closing prayer or invite one of the kids to do so.

What You Say: "Dear God, we know that you love us no matter what. Even if we never loved you in return, you would still continue to love us. Help us this week when we struggle to love those who are difficult. Remind us of the things we learned today and the way you want us to treat others because they matter to you. In Jesus' name. Amen."

Give each child a **GodTime Card** as adults arrive to pick up. Sunday leaders, hand out a **Parent Cue Card** (*in your small bin*) to any family who hasn't already received one this month. Ask adults to share with their kids, sometime during the week, a story about a time they chose to love somebody when it was difficult to do so.