



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.

●● **EARLY ARRIVER IDEA**

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

What You Need: Copy paper, pen

What You Do:

- Brainstorm together a list of all the reasons kids love the people in their lives.
- You might need to prompt them with questions like: Why do you love your mom? Why do you love your pets?



•• DO THE OPPOSITE

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

What You Need: No supplies needed

What You Do:

- As a group, come up with and practice some actions that can be considered “opposites.” For example:
 - Stand up/Sit down
 - Nod your head up and down/Shake your head back and forth
 - Clap your hands/Stomp your feet
 - Jump on one foot/Jump with both feet
 - Give someone a “high five”/Give someone a “fist bump”
- Ask the kids to stand facing you.
- Tell the group that you will say one of the actions you just practiced.
- Instruct them to respond back by doing the OPPOSITE action.
 - For example, if you say “nod your head,” they should respond by “shaking their head”
- Start slow and help kids get the idea of doing the opposite of what you say. Once everybody is familiar with the concept, see how fast they can play the game.

What You Say: “That was fun! You guys really know your opposites! [Transition] Today in Sunday CM worship/WOW family worship, we will hear/we heard a story about how Jesus wants us to do the opposite of what we really feel like doing when someone is not nice to us!”

[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.

•• LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

Made to Create | An activity that explores spiritual ideas through the process of drawing, building, and designing

What You Need: “Love Your Enemies” coloring page, crayons, Spark Story Bible

What You Do:

- If you didn’t do the “Early Arriver Idea” activity earlier, do it now. If you did it, remind kids of the reasons they gave for loving people.
- Hand out “Love Your Enemies” coloring pages and set out crayons where everybody can share them.
- Ask kids what they know about dogs, cats, and mice. Are they usually good friends, or do they often have trouble getting along?
- Tell kids that, as they color, you will read them a story from the Spark Story Bible about a challenging thing that Jesus asks us all to do. Read “Love Your Enemies” (p. 274-275).

What You Say: “It is pretty easy to love people who are nice to us and who love us back. Everyone was really surprised when Jesus taught people that God wants them to love EVERYBODY, even people who aren’t very nice. God wants us to do that, too! Let’s look at our coloring page. Normally, dogs, cats, and mice don’t get along very well. They tend to growl and hiss at one another or run away from each other. But, in our picture, they are standing together and trying to be on their best behavior! It doesn’t look like they think



it is easy, but they are going against what is natural and doing the opposite. That's what we should do when we are around people who we struggle to get along with; people who do things that aren't very nice. Even though we probably want to be mean right back, we should remember what Jesus said: **[Bottom Line] love others because they matter to God.** We can even pray for them. That is the best idea yet!"

●● **MEAN MATCH** [Talk about God | Bible Story Review | Application Activity]

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

What You Need: 2 sets of "Mean Match Cards"

What You Do:

- Shuffle the cards and place them face down in a three-by-four grid in the middle of your small group table.
- Play a memory match game with the cards.
- When a kid finds a match:
 - Talk about what's happening in the picture and how someone is being mean.
 - Guide kids to think of ways the other kid can be kind to that person instead of being mean back to them. For example:
 - If another kid tears their paper on purpose, they can say, "I forgive you," and walk away instead of yelling at them.
 - If someone screams at them for breaking a toy, they can stay calm, not scream back, and apologize for breaking the toy.
- Play until all matches have been found and all scenarios have been discussed.

NOTE: When talking about how to respond to people who are mean to them, you will want to be sensitive to kids who might be bullied or abused. Tell kids that if someone hurts them, they should talk to a trusted adult about it. Explain that we're all mean to others sometimes, but most of us aren't mean all the time. But if someone is mean to them over and over again, they should tell a parent, a teacher, or someone else they trust.

What You Say: "We all experience times when people are mean to us. But that doesn't mean we need to be mean back to them. **[Make It Personal]** *(Tell kids about a time someone was mean to you when you were a kid and how you responded in a kind way. If your response made the person change their attitude or actions in a positive way, even better!)* God doesn't want us to be mean back to people when they're mean to us. Even if we don't like someone, we should be kind to them. We should **[Bottom Line] love others because they matter to God.**"

Everyone is made by God and is important to God, which means we should treat everyone as if they matter—even if they weren't kind to us first. **[Bottom Line] Love others because they matter to God.**"

●● **MEMORY VERSE PUZZLE** [Hear from God | Memory Verse Activity]

Made to Create | An activity that explores spiritual ideas through the process of drawing, building, and designing

What You Need: "Memory Verse Puzzle" activity pages, crayons

What You Do:

- Give each kid a "Memory Verse Puzzle" activity page.
- Say the memory verse together until the kids have it memorized.
- Let kids color their pages.
- Encourage kids to take their puzzles home with them and work with their parents to cut out the pieces on the dashed lines.

What You Say: "I'm so glad that God loves us and sent Jesus to teach us how to love others. ALL others! God made every single one of us, which means we all matter! You matter (*point to kid*), and you matter (*continue with each kid*). Everyone matters! We should **[Bottom Line] love others because they matter to God.**" This week, I want you to mix up your puzzle pieces and put the puzzle back together every day! When you do, remember that God loves everybody and wants us to come together in love.

