

Known By

A Love Like No Other (August 16th, 2020)

PREPARATION

- Familiarize yourself with this Study Guide.
- If you missed it, watch the sermon online [HERE](#).
- Spend some time in prayer before your group gathers.
- You **always** have the option to use some or all the questions and/or prepare your own questions.
- Review the learning objective to focus the conversation, read the primary scriptures as a group, summarize the main points, ask the questions, and use supporting texts to enhance the concepts.

DISCUSSION

Opening Prayer: (1-2 minutes)

In light of what God is saying through this week's message, here's a suggestion of how your group can invite God into your time together.

Thank the Father for loving us so much that He came to us in the person of Jesus to sacrifice Himself on our behalf while we were still sinners! Pray that as we navigate the chaotic waters of our cultural moment that we would humbly listen and obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit as we seek to love one another, just as you have loved us! Pray that the Holy Spirit would give us the words to speak, show us opportunities to serve our neighbors, and continue to transform us into the likeness of Jesus so that we might lay down our lives for one another and gain the fulfillment of living your kingdom way!

Discussion: (45-60 minutes)

What's Going on This Week

This Sunday, Pastor Buz (Connections Pastor) and Pastor Butch (Pastor of Senior Adults) wrapped up our mini-series titled *Known By*. This week, the duo concludes the series by encouraging us to be a church known by our love for our enemies. Pastor Buz challenges us to love beyond what is normal by pointing us to the teachings of Jesus in Matthew 5 and his ability to forgive his persecutors while dying on the cross. Pastor Butch walks us through how David responded to the uprising of Absalom, his rebellious son, in Psalm 55 in order to explain how we ought to handle situations with our enemies!

“Even when Jesus had done nothing wrong, he showed us love. He wanted to FORGIVE the ones who killed him, who caused him pain, who forced him into a punishment he did not deserve. If Jesus could love those, and if we are going to call him Lord, we must do the same” – Pastor Buz Hannon

Suggested Questions

Check-In: Icebreaker – What comes to your mind when you think of the word *enemy*?

Study Tip: In the Sermon on the mount, Jesus presents a commonly held belief [“you have heard that it was said...”] and then radically transforms it according to his Godly standard [“But I say to you...”]. At face value, Jesus’ words suggest that the Jews of the first century must have heard that it was good to love their neighbor and hate their enemy. *But from whom were they hearing such a teaching?* One understanding is that the religious leaders took Leviticus 19:18 that says to, “love your neighbor as yourself,” and tacked on the second portion about enemies. It still begs the question *why would the religious leaders add this phrase to such an important passage?* One can imagine that a Jewish religious leader, who meditated on Old Testament scriptures, must have seen a God who opposed any foreign entity that would defile Israel. Consider God’s command to wipe out all of the inhabitants of Canaan as Israel entered the promise land (Ex. 34:12; Deut. 7:1-5, 23:3-6), or how some of the Psalms and Proverbs say that God hates the wicked (Ps. 5:5, 11:5, 139:21-22; Pr. 6:16-19). They assumed it was God’s delight to overthrow Israel’s pagan neighbors and maybe even the Roman Empire one day! However, if Jesus is God and he is correcting this understanding, is God somehow changing his mind? Another way to say it: *is the wrathful God of the Old Testament somehow different than the loving God of the New Testament?* If you are interested in joining that conversation, there are many apologists waiting for you on [YouTube](#)! For now, one only needs to look to the unwarranted forgiveness and mercy poured out to the unfaithful Israelites in order to find the love of God in the Old Testament (Ex. 34:6-7). Additionally, one only needs to look to the words of Jesus who brings a sword and other warnings of condemnation to find the wrathful God in Jesus (Matt. 7:23, 10:34, 23:1-39, 25:31-46). As you reflect on this study guide, meditate on the gospel message that Jesus came so that ALL nations, not just Israel, might experience God’s blessing of love and salvation from the condemnation we ALL deserve and why it becomes imperative to show the love of Jesus to ALL people so that they might be saved!

Objective #1: Meditate on the reactions and attitudes elicited by the command to love our enemies!

Primary Texts: Matthew 5:43-48 – Pastor Buz kicks off the sermon by breaking down Jesus’ command to love our enemy. He uses this scripture to show us how Jesus calls us to love beyond what is normal by (1) extending love beyond what is fair or deserving, (2) showing love to all people without favoritism, and (3) always seeking Jesus’ *perfect* standard of love. Over the course of your life, when was a time that you have either witnessed or experienced this Jesus-like kind of *love for your enemy*? Which one of these three categories stands out to today as you read this passage and why?

Objective #2: Explore the tangible ways we are coping with situations involving our enemies!

Primary Texts: Psalm 55; 1 Peter 5:6-10 – Next, Pastor Butch reflects on the story of David and Absalom in order to show us 3 ways we can seek the guidance of the Lord when dealing with one of our enemies. Pastor Butch suggests we ought to (1) **call** on the Lord [verse 16] as a first step instead of succumbing to revenge, gossip, or resentment (2) **cry out** to Him [verse 17] with our hurt, anguish, and confusion (3), and **cast** all cares onto the Lord [verse 22] trusting that God will provide over time! What would you say is your usual response to the schemes and attacks of our enemies? Which of the 3 areas do you think God is calling you to grow in?

Supporting texts: (Absalom) 2 Samuel 13:1-14, 21-22; 28-29; 15:4-6, 10-17, 30-34; 16:21-23; 17:1-14, 23; 18:6-15, 31-33

Objective #3: Identify the actions Jesus takes and seek to apply them in your life!

Primary Texts: John 13:1-20; Luke 23:32-34 – Finally, both Pastor Buz and Pastor Butch include tangible examples of Jesus’ love for his enemies. Pastor Butch mentions Jesus washing the feet of Judas who he knew would later betray him. Pastor Buz points to Jesus prayer of forgiveness for those who are persecuting him, mocking him, and nailing him to a cross. What does the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross teach you about *who* we should show love to and *how* we should love them? What are some of the ways that you can follow Jesus’ example and respond with love to those who are your enemy?

Closing Prayer: (5-10 minutes)

In light of what God is saying through this week's message, here's some suggestions of what your group could talk about with God in prayer.

Thank our Heavenly Father for revealing His love through his selfless and exemplary life and his sacrificial death on the cross! Ask that the Holy Spirit would continue to equip us to live, love, and forgive like Jesus in the various hardships and situations we face daily. Finally, pray that we as a church would unite as a people who are *known by* our love for one another simply because we are abiding in you as the source of love knowing that we can only love because you first loved us!

THROUGHOUT THE WEEK

-Host a Watch Party: At 3Crosses, we are excited to introduce [Watch Parties](#) for our Sunday Services. If you already have a social bubble meeting on Sundays, great! Be sure to let us know about it! Feel free to take a picture and send it in to AJ at avanegas@3crosses.org. If you are interested in launching a new Watch Party and *safely* opening up your home to new guests and those looking for community, let us know [HERE](#)

-Stay up to date with Coronavirus Ministry Opportunities: Help us out by pointing the people in your Community Group to [3Crosses.org/coronavirus](https://3crosses.org/coronavirus). If you or anyone in your group is looking to serve food in our pantry, access spiritual care, or seek financial assistance, you can find all you need at [3Crosses.org/neighborhood](https://3crosses.org/neighborhood)

- Find out how to pray for two people in your group this week! Pray that the members of your group would find a way to love beyond what is expected of them and love their enemies!

-Community Group Fall 2020: We will be launching a new Community Group Season starting August 23rd, 2020! For more information about joining a group, leading a group, or general inquiries, contact AJ at avanegas@3crosses.org