

the
truth
about
loving

CONNECT GROUP
DISCUSSION GUIDE

The Truth About Loving: Your Ex



RENAISSANCE
CHURCH

Read

On Sunday Christian used Matthew 5:43-48 to speak about *Loving Your Ex*.

⁴³ "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,⁴⁵ so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Reflect & Discuss

1. Share with your group a brief summary of a relationship that ended badly. What is your attitude toward the other person? Are you angry? Resigned? Sad? Numb? Discouraged? Hopeful?
2. What is your initial reaction to Jesus' command to "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you"? How do you think your friends and coworkers would respond if you told them you were trying to do this with an ex? Why do you think this concept is so counter-cultural?
3. Christian said that love is not first of all a feeling; it's an action that seeks the benefit of another person without considering the cost or benefit to me. How do you think that understanding of love affects the way we can live out Jesus' command to love our enemies?
4. In Romans 5:8-10 the Apostle Paul says,
⁸ But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life.
 - What aspects of this passage are most meaningful to you?
 - How do you react to Paul's statement in verse 10 that we were God's enemies? Do you think of yourself as having been God's enemy?
 - How would you explain the relationship between what Paul is saying here and what Jesus is saying in Matthew 5:43-48?

5. Christian gave four suggestions for what not to do when loving an ex.

- Do not cultivate hatred.
- Do not retaliate.
- Do not weaponize your tongue.
- Do not look back.

Which of these suggestions are easiest/hardest for you? How would you explain the benefits of living out each concept and the drawbacks of failing to do so? Share a story with your group of either a success or a failure in living out these ideals. What ideas do you have for how we can grow in these areas?

6. Christian gave four positive suggestions for what to do when loving an ex.

- Cultivate love.
- Pray.
- Speak kindly.
- Look forward.

Which of these suggestions are easiest/hardest for you? How would you explain the benefits of living out each concept and the drawbacks of failing to do so? Share a story with your group of either a success or a failure in living out these ideals. What ideas do you have for how we can grow in these areas?

Personalize It

Let's personalize and apply what we've been discussing.

1. Think of a person whom you consider to be an ex. Using Christian's suggestions for loving an ex, choose one "to do" and one "not to do" to work on this week with regard to your ex. What step(s) will you take to live up to those ideals?
2. How can we pray for you?

Reflecting on Scripture

Using the *Reflecting on Scripture* guide (see www.renchurch.com/connectgroups), set aside at least ten minutes three days this week to reflect on the passages below. Focus on one passage each day, and ask God to use it to help you love your ex more like Jesus has commanded.

Matthew 5:43-48

⁴³ "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,⁴⁵ so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Romans 5:8-10

⁸ But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.⁹ Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God.¹⁰ For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life.

Ephesians 4:29-32

²⁹ Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear.³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption.³¹ Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice,³² and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.