

EVEN MY ENEMY? [loving your enemies— Proverbs 25]

THIS WEEK

Through movies, TV shows, and violence in society, junior highers and middle schoolers have learned to deal with enemies in a manner far different than that required by Jesus. Christ's teaching is radically different from what your kids may think—in fact, they may pull back in surprise at this session. Your kids may struggle with the plan God lays out for dealing with enemies and maybe can't imagine how it would help them. This TalkSheet session provides a great opportunity to challenge students to see if they really trust God enough to follow his commands.

OPENER

Draw up a list of 20 feuding or competing pairs that your kids would know, both real and fictional such as—

- The Road Runner and Wile E. Coyote
- Microsoft and Apple
- Darth Vader and Luke Skywalker
- Coke and Pepsi
- McDonalds and Burger King
- NBC and ABC

(Use your brains to come up with some more your kids will know!) Then use this list to hold a fun contest with your kids.

Pass out pieces of paper to each of your kids with one-half of the adversary pairs listed. Their task is to find the second half of the correct adversary. Or if your group isn't big enough for that, have your kids write down who they think the other adversary is. You may want to give small prizes to those who get the most correct pairs.

THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. As you discuss your kids' enemies, be sure not to ask for names. Instead, ask them how the person became their enemy. What did the person say or do to them? How have your kids responded to their enemies—in good or bad ways?
2. How do people typically handle their enemies? How do people usually treat those who they think of as enemies? You may want to ask which of the ways listed seem crazy and why. How does society in general treat their enemies?
3. What does the Bible say about dealing with an enemy? You may want to make a list of their ideas on a poster board or whiteboard. Discuss how this conflicts with the way people usually treat those they dislike. Do your kids think it'd be easy to follow these commands? Why or why not?
4. How would your kids' enemies respond if they were treated as Christ instructed? Have a few

willing students share their answers. Then ask them this—how would you react if your enemy treated you as Christ commanded?

5. Where do your kids rank on this scale? If you don't want to ask for specific rankings, ask how many of them rank more toward the right (or left). Why is loving your enemies hard for most people to do? Challenge your kids to start treating their enemies as Christ commanded. Where would your kids like to rank themselves in a few months? A year? Five years?

THE CLOSE

Explain to your group that it's difficult—but not impossible—to treat enemies with love and kindness. Point out that this process is done one step at a time, starting with something simple such as refusing to get back at a person or spread gossip. Encourage your group members to ask God for help in dealing with their enemies and to ask him for the strength to love the enemy back. Challenge them to pray for one enemy during the week and to see what happens—does the relationship improve? Why or why not? What is God teaching them about love, patience, and perseverance?

MORE

- Ask your students to rewrite Matthew 5:43-48 by substituting the name of a person who they would consider their enemy for the word enemy. What does this verse say to them? Is this verse an encouragement to them or not? How do these verses relate with being a Christian?
- How did some biblical characters handle their enemies? You may want to take a look at some of these stories and examples. Check out the relationship between Jesus and Satan (Matthew 4:1-10), Jacob and Esau (Genesis 27:41), Esther and Mordecai (Esther 9), David and Goliath (1 Samuel 17:1-54), or Joseph and his brothers (Genesis 37). How did God work in these relationships and what happened? Note how God used the bad for the good—the same thing he can do with enemies today.