

Love ~~not~~ ~~HATE~~

Small Group Bible Study

This study is on the same theme as the sermon outline (p16-17) and looks at some of the same verses mentioned in it. It can be used before or after hearing the sermon. If it is used without the sermon, it may be helpful for the group leader to read through the sermon outline beforehand. You may also like to read the SCAW 2018 eight-day devotional booklet, which is enclosed with this magazine and can be ordered from: www.barnbasfund.org/scaw. Or contact your nearest Barnabas Fund office (details inside front cover).

The section headed "Digging Deeper" is intended for those who would like to explore the theme in more depth.



READ JOHN 15:18-25

1. Jesus speaks about the world hating His followers. What does "the world" mean here?
2. In the Greek New Testament, the word translated "church" is *ekklesia*, literally meaning "called out", that is, called out of the world. We who belong to Christ no longer belong to the world, and that is why the world hates us. Which feels more like home to you – the world or the Church (the Christian community)?
3. Why do some non-Christians hate some Christians?
4. Would those same non-Christians hate Christ Himself?
5. Have you ever experienced hatred or persecution because you follow Christ? How did it make you feel? Did you say or do anything in response?
6. Jesus told us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matt. 6:44). How can we love our enemies? What should we pray for those who persecute us? (For some ideas, look at Luke 23:34 and Rom.12:14.)
7. Jesus was hated without cause or reason (v.25). Sadly, there are times when Christians behave in a way that gives good reason for others to hate them. But Romans 12:18 tells us that, if it is possible, as far as it depends on us, we should live at peace with everyone. What can we do to try and live at peace with others? Are there any situations when we cannot live at peace with others, for example, if it would mean compromising our Christian faith? Discuss where you think the line should be drawn between standing for Christ and having harmonious relationships with other people.



READ JOHN 15:12-17

8. How does it make you feel to know that Jesus is your friend?
9. What is the thing that specially marks out the friends of Jesus in their relationship with Him? (v. 14)
10. What is the thing that specially marks out the friends of Jesus in their relationship with each other? (v.12,17)
11. John says more about the importance of Christians loving each other in his first letter. In 1 John 3:15 he tells us that anyone who hates a fellow Christian is a murderer. How can we understand

this startling statement? Think about the inner attitude and the outer action – which controls the other? Compare what John wrote with what Jesus said in Matthew 5:21-24.

12. With Jesus as our friend we can face hatred and persecution. But we need to abide and remain in Him (John 15:4-5). What can we do to help ourselves to abide in Christ? A little book called *The Practice of the Presence of God* records how a monk in the 17th century tried to love God, seek Him and converse with Him continually through the day. What advice would you give to busy Christians in the 21st century about how to dwell in the presence of the Lord moment by moment?
13. Is there a danger of getting too "matey" with our friend Jesus? What can we do to nurture an attitude of reverence and awe towards the King of kings and Lord of lords?



WRITE A SONG OR PRAYER

14. You may know the hymn *What a friend we have in Jesus* (source given on p20). It was written as a poem in 1855 by Joseph M. Scriven to comfort his mother who was living far away in Ireland while he was in Canada. Write a few lines to express what it means to you that Jesus is your friend and how that helps you cope when you are lonely, rejected or hated.

Digging deeper

15. Is hatred ever justified? If so, is it still hatred, or something else? How does this compare with the concept of righteous anger?
16. Are there any things we ought to hate? (Ps. 97:10; Prov 13:5; Eccles. 3:8; Rom. 12:9) Are there any people we ought to hate?
17. We know that God is love, and yet there are things that He hates. (Ps.11:5; Isa. 1:13-14; Zech. 8:17) Do we hate what God hates and love what God loves? If not, why not? (Rom. 12:2; 1 Cor. 2:16)
18. Jesus warned His followers of persecution not only during the Last Supper in the upper room, as recorded in our passage here, but also on earlier occasions. (See for example Matt. 10:17-22 and Mark 13:21). If you are not already living in a context of anti-Christian persecution, are you ready for persecution? If not, how can you prepare yourself?