

## Turn the Other Cheek



- Theme:** Don't get even—get over it! The seventh Sunday after Epiphany, Yr. A
- Object:** None is needed
- Scripture:** "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also." Matthew 5:38-39 (NIV)

Imagine this scene on the playground at school. Children are playing at recess when one child pushes another. That child pushes back. Then the first child retaliates by hitting the another child who then hits him back. Soon, the two are involved in a knock-down, drag-out fight.

The teacher soon arrives and asks, "What's going on here?"

"He pushed me!" one child responds.

"Well, he pushed me first!" replies the other.

"He hit me!"

"He hit me back!"

I'm sure you have seen something like this happen on the playground at school. What do you think? If someone pushes you, isn't it OK to push them back? If someone hits you, isn't it fair for you to hit back?

I think it would be a good idea to see what Jesus has to say about this in today's Bible lesson. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told his followers, "You have heard it said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say, do not resist an evil person! If someone slaps you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also." That doesn't sound fair, does it?

But Jesus went even further! "You have heard the law that says, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say, love your enemies! In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? If you are only kind to your friends, how are you different from anyone else?"

So, that is what Jesus said and that is what he expects of us. We can only do that if we ask God to help us.

Father, sometimes we want to strike back when someone hurts us. Give us the strength and courage to do as Jesus taught us and "Turn the other cheek." In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

**BUBBLES EVERYWHERE:** The teacher will blow soap bubbles everywhere around the room and allow the children to pop as many bubbles as they can. After doing this for a short time, the teacher will stop and tell the children that the next time the teacher blows soap bubbles, they

aren't allowed to touch or pop any bubbles, they can only watch as the bubbles float around them. Tell the children that in today's lesson, they will learn to exercise self control and show LOVE to all those around them.

**HEART OBSTACLE COURSE:** Create an obstacle course using items in the room. (chairs, small tables, etc.) Each item will have a paper heart with instructions written on it. The children will move through the course in a line and will stop and do what the instructions on the heart tell them to do - such as "crawl under this table"; or "hop around this chair"; or "climb over this pile of blocks". Tell the children that there will always be obstacles to stop us from turning the other cheek but our HEART will show us how to LOVE others.

**FINGER PAINTING HEART:** Provide the children with a piece of paper and finger paints to cover the paper in pretty colors. Children can then use a tool or their fingers to draw a heart and write words from today's lesson about loving one another.

**BIBLE VERSE ILLUSTRATING:** Give each child a sheet of paper and markers, stickers or pictures of eyes and teeth. The children will write today's Bible verse (Matthew 5:38-39) substituting pictures for the words eye, tooth, etc. Children will enjoy being creative in creating their memory verse sheet.

**PRAYER HANDS:** Give each child a piece of construction paper to fold in half from top to bottom. They will place one hand on the paper with their wrist at the FOLD of the paper. They will then trace around their hand and cut out that tracing. That will create folded "prayer hands." Inside the hands, the children will draw a heart on the palm and write LOVE ONE ANOTHER or something similar of their choice. Words from today's lesson or Bible verse may be written in bright markers on each finger.

**WALL HEART MOBILE:** This activity can be a class project or an individual activity. A large heart can be cut out of construction paper. To insure that both sides of the heart are the same size, fold paper first and then cut out half of the heart. Children may also cut out many smaller hearts of various colors and write words of Love and words from our Bible lesson today on those little hearts. These hearts will be hung from the large heart using red yarn. If this is done as a class project, each child can write something on a heart to be hung by yarn and hang this mobile in the classroom. If the teacher chooses, this could be a PRAYER MOBILE by writing the names of other children that may have special prayer needs or people that we have difficulty loving. (Discuss Matthew 5:44)

**LOVING HEART:** Create a "loving heart" which can be traced, cut out, then glued to a larger piece of construction paper. Tiny pieces of colored tissue paper can be "wadded" up and glued to the heart, or just small squares or shapes can be glued to the heart. Write the Bible verse Matthew 5:44 around the heart.

**LOVE GOD BOOK MARKER:** Cut out a cross-shaped book marker and glue a heart to the cross where the vertical and horizontal parts of the cross intersect. Give the children small foam or cut-out letters L\_\_OVE to glue going downward on the vertical section of the cross (with the heart serving as the "O") and G \_\_ D to glue on the horizontal section of the cross (with the heart serving as the "O").

## Love Your Enemies



**Theme:** Love one another -- even your enemies. Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany, Yr. A

**Object:** A large heart cut out of red poster board

**Scripture:** "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." Matthew 5:43-44

What do you think of when you see a heart? (Hold up the heart.) Most of us would probably say that when we see a heart, we think of love. Who do you love? Do you love your parents? Do you love your brother or sister? How about your best friend? Do you love your teacher? It is easy to love these people, because they love us too.

Are there any boys or girls that are mean to you at recess? Has anyone ever said something about you that was not true? Do you love those boys and girls? Should we really be expected to love people who are mean to us, treat us badly, and say ugly things about us? Well, let's listen to what Jesus told us to do.

One day Jesus was teaching out on a hillside. We call his lesson that day "The Sermon on the Mount." In his sermon, Jesus said some things that really surprised his listeners. "You have heard that you should love your neighbors and hate your enemies," Jesus said. "But I say, love your enemies -- and if someone does mean and hateful things to you, pray them."

Why should we love our enemies? Jesus said that when we love our enemies, we are acting like children of God. If we only love those who love us, will God reward us for that? If we are only kind to our friends, what is so great about that? Everybody does that!

It isn't always easy to love your enemies, but there are some good reasons for doing it.

- It demonstrates the love of God to others.
- It sets a good example for others to follow.
- It turns enemies into friends.

Father, it is easy to love those who love us. Help us to love our enemies so that they might know that we are your children. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

**HEART RUN:** Divide the class into teams and each team will run a relay of a HEART RUN by running to the basket on the other side of the room and grabbing a cut out heart and taping it on their shirt and running back to the team for the next player to run to the basket and grab a heart and pin it on the shirt and continue to play until all the team has completed their heart run.

**HEART MAZE:** Set up an obstacle maze course for children to follow the hearts in the correct order. The hearts all along the maze course will be numbered one to twenty for the children to follow. When the children reach the end, they will decorate a heart and bring it back to place it on giant poster board heart on the classroom wall. Children can write on the heart words such as LOVE YOUR ENEMIES, or PRAY FOR YOUR ENEMIES, etc.

**PIN CROSS ON HEART:** Let the children take turns being blindfolded and turned around and around and then pin or tape a cut-out cross to a giant heart on the wall. A variation to the game might be to have the children try to tape a small heart with their name on it to a large cross on the wall, so that when the game is over, there will be many hearts on the cross. Then PRAY together as a class for all of their enemies to see JESUS in their HEART and to LOVE them as Jesus wants us to love them.

**HEART BOOKMARKERS:** Provide the children with various colored heart cut-outs to glue to a book mark that they will decorate and write LOVE MY ENEMIES, or to write today's Bible verse on the marker.

**HEART WREATH:** Give each child a paper plate that has the middle cut out of it so plate will act as a wreath for children to tape or glue cut-out hearts of various colors around the edge of the

paper plate. Hang the plate by a string or yarn. On many of the hearts, the children may want to draw pictures or write names of others to pray for.

**HEART BUTTON PIN:** Give the children construction paper, markers, stickers and glitter to decorate a badge that they can attach to their shirts. Children may write things such as LOVE AND PRAY FOR MY ENEMIES on the badge when decorating it. Tape the badge to their shirt, or hot glue a safety pin to the back to pin to the child's shirt.

**HEART PRAYER:** Place a large red heart on the table or tack it to the classroom wall. Let the children take bright markers to take turns writing words from today's prayer on the heart. ("Father, it is easy to love those who love us. Help us to love our enemies so that they might know that we are your children. In Jesus' name we pray, AMEN.) Around the edge of the heart, have the children to write their name in one continuous border for the heart.

**HEART MOBILE:** Let the children decorate an empty paper towel roll with colored paper and stickers. Cut out and decorate hearts from construction paper. Attach the hearts to the decorated paper roll with short pieces of yarn. Each heart may have parts of today's lesson or Bible verse written on it. Place a long piece of yarn or string all the way through the paper roll and tie at the top for hanging.

**LOVE CHART:** This activity can be done on a large sheet of poster board or as a chalkboard activity. Let each child draw a heart and write a reason inside the drawn heart that they should love others. This can lead to a group discussion of why and how to love others, as well as problems that children might face in dealing with an "enemy".