

7.1 Large Group Lesson | Elementary



LEADER DEVOTIONAL

For many years when I read Matthew 5:44, the first word that came to mind was “frenemy.” Let me show you what I mean — take a look at the verse:

“But here is what I tell you. Love your enemies. Pray for those who hurt you.”

You might be thinking, “Frenemy? What in the world is that, and how did you get that from this verse?” Great question! “Frenemy” is the popular combination of the words “friend” and “enemy.” More specifically, it’s a noun defined as “a person with whom one is friendly despite a fundamental dislike or rivalry.”

In the past, I always thought of this verse through pragmatic terms. How do you love your enemy practically speaking? How do you wish the best for someone you’re fundamentally at odds with? You treat them like a frenemy. You show kindness to them on the outside, but continue to dislike them on the inside. You smile, say “hello,” and give a kind wave of the hand, but fantasize internally about their demise. In essence, I had resigned myself to the belief that I could not truly and completely love my enemy.

As I researched the word “frenemy” further, I found it defined in the Merriam-Webster dictionary as “one who pretends to be a friend but is actually an enemy.” I realized that pretending to show love to someone falls way short of what Jesus is calling for in Matthew 5:4. He calls us to not just love them outwardly, but love them inwardly by spending time praying for them. And in praying for them, I am asking God to truly and richly bless them.

Simply creating a façade and *pretending* to love our enemies actually makes us their enemy because we are not desiring God’s grace and mercy for them. God wants us to both outwardly *and* inwardly love our enemies, not just be their frenemy.

Do you have a frenemy? If so, think about what it means to love them more like a friend. Spend time in prayer asking God to truly and richly bless them. You might find that in doing so, you, too, are truly and richly blessed.

Mindy Rausch
GO! Team Member

Sunday Check-In

Sunday morning check-in to build connection, encourage spiritual growth, and reinforce our expectations upstairs.

1. Check-In (5–7 min):

Ask each child:

- What was a high from your week?
- What was a low from your week?
- Any prayer requests?

(Feel free to share your own too!)

2. Rule Reminder (2–3 min):

Go over our 3 rules for upstairs:

1. Respect God – Worship, listen, use kind words
2. Respect People – Be kind, share, follow leaders
3. Respect the Building – Take care of the space & supplies

Thanks for leading with love and consistency!

