

FOR THE LOVE OF GOD + -

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES: JESUS ON VIOLENCE

This segment comes from **EPISODE 1: WAR + PEACE**.

From Jesus' command to "love your enemies" to the idea of "holy war" is a giant leap. Yet from the Old Testament through to the Crusades and the inquisitions, Christian history is full of violence. Has Christianity been a major contributor to war? How have the followers of a crucified leader managed to get things so wrong? This segment takes a close look at what Jesus has to say when it comes to violence.



THEME QUESTION

Choose an image that you think describes Jesus' attitude to violence.



ENGAGE

1. Share about a time when someone has wronged you. How did you respond?
2. Do you think that the statement "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" is a fair way to think about actions and reactions to wrongdoing?
3. Read this article, "[Flip the script, a message for Christmas](https://cpx.video/flipthescript)" (cpx.video/flipthescript) by CPX's Natasha Moore.
 - a. What is your reaction to the first story in the article?
 - b. Find three other examples not mentioned in the article of when people have "flipped the script" and met hate with love.
4. Read the quote on the following page from [A Concise History of the Christian World Mission](https://cpx.video/mission) (cpx.video/mission) by J. Herbert Kane. Are you surprised that Gandhi drew inspiration from Jesus Christ? Why or why not?

“... Mahatma Gandhi, the most influential person in India ... had close contacts with evangelical Christians in England, South Africa, and India, and his knowledge of Christian doctrine was considerable. His concept of nonviolence (*satyagraha*), which he used so effectively against the British Raj, he got from the Sermon on the Mount, not the Bhagavad Gita.”

Evangelical: Adherents to Christianity who give the authority of the Bible the highest weight

Sermon on the Mount: A long passage of Jesus’ teaching, recorded in Matthew 5-7

Bhagavad Gita: A key sacred text of Hinduism



UNDERSTAND AND EVALUATE



WATCH the segment: “Love your enemies: Jesus on violence” (cpx.video/enemies)

1. What was distinctive about Jesus’ teaching about the “Kingdom of God”?
2. Why was Jesus’ message to “shun violence” so strange for those who first heard it?
3. How did Jesus’ early followers respond to his command to “love your enemies”?
4. Briefly describe Emperor Nero’s treatment of Christians as recorded by the historian, Tacitus.
 - a. What is your reaction to this?
 - b. How did Christians respond to Nero’s treatment?
5. Read the following excerpt from Ignatius. Explain how these encouragements would have been counter-cultural in the Roman Empire.

“In response to their anger, be gentle; in response to their boasts, be humble; and in response to their cruelty, be civilised. Do not be eager to imitate them. Let us show by our gracious forbearance that we are their brothers and sisters. Let us be eager to be imitators of the Lord.”

Ignatius: Letter to the Ephesians

6. At the end of the video, William Cavanaugh says that the early Christians preferred to go to their deaths rather than shed blood, and for that reason the early Christian church is full of martyrs.
 - a. What do you think was so attractive about Jesus' message of non-violence for these early Christians?
 - b. What concerns or questions do you have about this?

BIBLE FOCUS

READ Matthew 5:9-10.

1. Who does Jesus call "blessed" in these verses?
2. Why is it surprising for these categories of people to be called "blessed"?

READ Matthew 5:38-48.

3. Explain Jesus' teaching on how to respond when you have been wronged (v.38-42).
4. Choose one word to describe your reaction to this teaching.
5. Describe how Jesus wants his followers to treat their enemies.
6. Outline the justification Jesus gives for this (v.44-45).

READ Romans 5:6-10

7. Who were Jesus' enemies, and how did he show love to them?
8. How might this teaching further motivate us to love our enemies?

