

Read: Matthew 10:5a,21-33

Standing Up to Hate

Matthew 10:22

You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

There once was a phrase that was intended to help children handle when other kids would say mean things. It goes like this: “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” Here is what that sentence means. While someone else may be able to hurt us physically, words alone can’t really do that much damage, because they’re just words.

If you have never heard that statement before, there’s probably a reason: it’s not true! Words *do* hurt. When other people say mean things to us or about us, it can hurt very much. It may not cause the kind of hurt that would require a Band-Aid or a cast like a physical injury could, but words can hurt us inside and make us feel sad.

The Bible tells us to always speak kindly to others so that our words don’t hurt them. However, Jesus also warns us that because we believe in him, there will be times when people will say hurtful things to and about us. In fact, Jesus even goes a step further—he doesn’t just warn us that others will say mean things to us, but that they will even *hate* us!

You may have experienced it when you were made fun of for going to church on Sunday. When someone else found out that you believe the Bible is actually God’s Word, they may have responded by calling you dumb for believing such a thing. When these things happen, you are experiencing what Jesus said would happen—others hate you because of him.

So, what should you do? Jesus tells us, “Stand firm.” While *their* words may hurt, Jesus says to stand firmly on *his* Word. Continue to believe and trust in him even when it means others might ridicule us or make fun of us for it. Others may hate us or dislike us, but Jesus never stops loving us. Stand firmly in his love for you, and it may just soften the hearts of those who hate so that they come to know how much Jesus loves them, too.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- How does it feel when someone else says something mean to you?
- When someone else says something mean to you, how can it help to think of how Jesus feels about you?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Jesus was hated too. Identify one of the times in the Bible when Jesus was hated.
- How can you find encouragement in how Jesus responded to those who hated him?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- How might you be tempted to hide your faith to avoid being made fun of for it?
- What do you think it means that “hurt people, hurt people,” and how might that affect how you respond when someone else ridicules you for your faith?

Closing Prayer:

Dear Jesus, words hurt, and hurtful words come from hate-filled hearts. Guard our hearts from hating others, and when others hate us because of you, keep us standing steadily on the promise of your never-ending love for us. Amen.