

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

a 10 minute daily devotional | week 7

thursday | prayer

Take 10 minutes to pray that God will help you respond to mistreatment in a godly way. Here's a prayer to get you started:
"Lord, help me to imitate Your great mercy and forgiveness. Help me to forgive those who have hurt me and help me to rise above any injustice I encounter. Jesus, I trust in You."

friday | application

Do a favor for someone; do more than they expect. Even better, do a favor for someone that you think has wronged you.

saturday | journaling

Spend 10 minutes recording your thoughts/feelings from your week immersed in Matthew 5:38-42.

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. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

Matthew 5:38-42

monday | devotional

In 1 Peter 2:21-24 Jesus is placed before us as an example to be followed when we suffer at the hands of others. It says, “Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. ‘He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.’ When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. ‘He himself bore our sins’ in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; ‘by his wounds you have been healed.’”

It isn’t just the example of Jesus life that calls us to respond in a certain way to those who wrong us, it is also his teaching. In our passage, Matthew 5:38-42, Jesus says, “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ But I tell you, *do not resist an evil person*” (italics added).

Jesus’ point in our passage isn’t to tell us self-defense is bad, it isn’t to tell us to be doormats for hurtful people to walk all over, and it isn’t to speak to the idea of the justness of war. Instead, Jesus’ point is calling us to respond to those who hurt us with grace and love for their good. This is exactly the example he sets as described in 1 Peter 2:21-24. When people unjustly wronged Jesus, He did not sin, he did not retaliate, he trusted God, and he made an incredible sacrifice for the good of the very people who hurt him.

We probably won’t be called to die for others. So, how do we actually live out the example of Jesus when responding to those who wrong us? The examples that follow in Matthew 5, of turning the cheek, going the extra mile, giving the extra clothing, and lending freely, are telling. They give us a glimpse into how we can live out the principle Jesus’ has set forth by his words and example.

These tangible examples show us that this call isn’t to have positive feelings towards the hurtful person; it is a call to do something that benefits the other persons’ life. Unlike Jesus, we probably won’t have to lay down our lives. But we can bless people who have hurt us. If someone steals your parking spot at Starbucks, pay for their coffee. If someone says something hurtful to you, write them a card telling them some things you appreciate about them. If your boss asks you to stay an extra hour at work, stay two extra hours to get the project done. If your friend forgot your birthday, make a big deal out of their birthday. Jesus isn’t calling us to forgive and forget. He’s calling us to tangibly show people love when they have wronged us for their good.

In my sermon Sunday I told the story of Corrie Ten Boom offering forgiveness to a guard from the concentration camp where she was held during the Holocaust — the same concentration camp her sister had died in. This story takes place just after she gave a speech at a church in Munich. I think it is appropriate to end this devotional with the fuller version of that story, as told by Eric Metaxes:

“At the close of the service, a balding man in a gray overcoat stepped forward to greet her. Corrie froze. She knew this man well; he’d been one of the most vicious guards at Ravensbrück, one who had mocked the women prisoners as they showered. ‘It came back with a rush,’ she wrote, ‘the huge room with its harsh overhead lights; the pathetic pile of dresses and shoes in the center of the floor; the shame of walking naked past this man.’

And now he was pushing his hand out to shake hers, and saying:

‘A fine message, Fraulein! How good it is to know that, as you say, all our sins are at the bottom of the sea!’

And I, who had spoken so glibly of forgiveness, fumbled in my pocketbook rather than take that hand. He would not remember me, of course — how could he remember one prisoner among those thousands of women?

But I remembered him and the leather crop swinging from his belt. I was face to face with one of my captors, and my blood seemed to freeze.

‘You mentioned Ravensbrück in your talk,’ he was saying. ‘I was a guard there... But since that time,’ he went on, ‘I have become a Christian. I know that God has forgiven me for the cruel things I did there, but I would like to hear it from your lips as well. Fraulein’ — again the hand came out — ‘will you forgive me?’

And I stood there — I whose sins had again and again to be forgiven — and could not forgive. Betsie had died in that place — could he erase her slow terrible death simply for the asking?

The soldier stood there expectantly, waiting for Corrie to shake his hand. She ‘wrestled with the most difficult thing I had ever had to do. For I had to do it — I knew that. The message that God forgives has a prior condition: that we forgive those who have injured us.’

Standing there before the former S.S. man, Corrie remembered that forgiveness is an act of the will — not an emotion. ‘Jesus, help me!’ she prayed. ‘I can lift my hand. I can do that much. You supply the feeling.’

Corrie thrust out her hand.

And as I did, an incredible thing took place. The current started in my shoulder, raced down my arm, sprang into our joined hands. And then this healing warmth seemed to flood my whole being, bringing tears to my eyes.

‘I forgive you, brother!’ I cried. ‘With all my heart.’

For a long moment we grasped each other’s hands, the former guard and the former prisoner. I had never known God’s love so intensely as I did then.”

tuesday | commentary

Below are seven snippets of commentary. After you’ve read them write a short statement explaining how it helps you better understand Matthew 5:38-42.

“Without a doubt, this section (Mt 5:38-48) has been one of the most misinterpreted and consequently misapplied sections of the entire Sermon. For example, some have appealed to these passages to justify their call for Christians be veritable ‘doormats.’”

The Old Testament Law of reciprocity (see Deuteronomy 19), “specifies in context that it is to be carried out by the judges and civil authorities of Israel. It is true, that an injured party might be allowed to inflict the actual punishment, but even in these situations it was the civil body that had the responsibility to try and sentence the guilty one.”

“Jesus does not teach Christians are not to resist evil. What He forbids is that Christians do not seek to retaliate in personal relationships, which is what the Pharisees were teaching. “

IVP Background Commentary, “The blow on the right cheek was the most grievous insult in the ancient Near East. The clothing in the verse refers to the outer and inner cloak, respectively; the poorest of people (like the average peasant in Egypt) might have only one of each...”

Kent Hughes, “Notice that Jesus specifically mentions “the right cheek,” which tells us he is describing a backhanded slap (since most people are right-handed, this is surely what Jesus had in mind). According to rabbinic law, to hit someone with the back of the hand was twice as insulting as hitting him with the flat of the hand.”

“Roman law gave a Roman soldier the right to conscript civilians to carry their burdens for one mile (and only for one mile), the equivalent of a Roman mile, slightly shorter than the modern mile. The purpose of this law was to relieve the soldier but it was extremely inconvenient to citizen pressed into service. To add “insult to injury” those carrying the soldiers equipment or weapons were the very ones the Romans were oppressing!”

Jesus “is calling for genuine generosity that originates in a new heart, which is counter to our nature tendency toward possessiveness.”

wednesday | questions

1. Read 1 Peter 3:10-12. Why do you think truthfulness is so important to God?
2. This passage is about being honest and taking promises seriously. In what ways does our culture contrast Jesus’ teachings here?
3. In what areas of life do you struggle to follow through on what you say you’ll do?
4. Share one thought from this passage that you find most meaningful and why.