

# Command #7: Don't seek revenge but go the second mile.

Matthew 5:38-42 // Jerry Barber & Greg Singerle

<sup>38</sup> "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' <sup>39</sup> 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. <sup>40</sup> And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. <sup>41</sup> If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. <sup>42</sup> Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

## Condensed Version

Read Matthew 5:38-42 and discuss these questions with your disciple(s):

1. Read Deuteronomy 19:16-21 to get the background and summarize whom this "law of retaliation" was written for, why, and what it actually meant.
2. In verses 39-42, Jesus gives four examples of non-retaliation, or being gracious to those who do not treat us properly. Identify them.
3. As you reflect on Luke 23:34, what do you admire about Jesus from this verse?
4. What is at least one specific way that you can put this principle of "non-retaliation" into practice in your life?

## Study (answers follow below)

1. Meditate on Matthew 5:38-42 and make several observations about the passage.
2. It is very important to understand verse 38 properly: "*You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.'*" Read Deuteronomy 19:16-21 to get the background and summarize whom this "law of retaliation" was written for, why, and what it actually meant.
3. Read Matthew 5:39-42 and identify how Jesus' teaching addresses a different type of retaliation than the "judicial retaliation" addressed in verse 38.
4. In verses 39-42, Jesus gives four examples of non-retaliation, or being gracious to those who do not treat us properly. Identify them.

## Answers:

1. (many answers possible here)
2. Deuteronomy 19:16-21 is an instruction to the judges in Israel in which God sanctioned **judicial retaliation** in order to protect personal relationships. This "law of retaliation" was a legitimate OT **judicial** principle of equivalent compensation. It laid the foundation of justice by naming the punishment which a wrongdoer deserved and limiting the compensation of his victim to an exact equivalent and no more: eye for eye, tooth for tooth, etc. In other words, it was a "check" for INAPPROPRIATE punishment—it made sure the punishment fit the crime and no more, and it also confined punishment to the court system rather than leaving it in the hands of individual vigilantes.
3. Jesus forbids *personal retaliation* in order to protect personal relationships (39-42). The "law of retaliation" was a legitimate OT judicial principle of equivalent compensation, but Jesus does not want his followers to apply it to their private, personal offences.

4. Four examples:

- a. Showing grace when faced with a public insult (<sup>39</sup>*If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also*). This was a symbolic way of attacking someone's dignity and honor and was very important in eastern cultures like the one Jesus lived in.
- b. Showing grace when sued (<sup>40</sup>*And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well*). Jewish men typically wore two garments—an inner garment which was a shirt or tunic of linen or wool worn next to the skin, and an outer garment which was a robe or a cloak. This outer robe, translated here as “coat,” also doubled as a sleeping blanket in an open field and could not legally be taken from someone (even a debtor), so Jesus is asking his disciples to give up their lawful rights (cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1-7*, 544). In fact, he is asking them not to focus on their “rights” but to give even more. If someone was trying for the inner garment, give them the outer robe too. It's not fair; it's not right; it's not a reasonable request—but Jesus' followers are called to respond REALLY DIFFERENTLY.
- c. Showing grace when forced into service (<sup>41</sup>*If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles*). In ancient times, officials from the government or military could force civilians to do tasks for them. Roman soldiers could find common people and, without paying them, force them to construct roads, fortifications and public buildings. They could call on somebody to help on the spot with whatever task they wanted. Jesus teaches that if they force you to go a mile, offer to go a second. In other words, stop focusing on what is “fair” and center on what is Christlike. Put less stress on personal vengeance and more on Christlikeness.
- d. Showing grace when asked to give (<sup>42</sup>*Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you*). There were a lot of poor and needy people in the first century Greco-Roman world, and Jesus' followers should not reject their pleas for help. This is a challenging one, but it does not refer to *indiscriminate* giving, because it is only part of what the Bible teaches. These are EXAMPLES, not fully-detailed absolutes (cf. D.A. Carson, *Matthew*).

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### Worship

What is at the heart of the message here in Matthew 5:38-42? To say it is only teaching about overlooking an offense would be incomplete and stop short of the greater purpose revealed in these verses. It is about going beyond overlooking an offense (which includes forgiveness) to extending grace to a person – the giving of that which is undeserved. Forgiveness has to do with restoring to a previous state of a relationship while grace is intended to deepen that relationship.

If you have trusted in Christ alone for salvation, you realize that you were saved when God opened your eyes to your sinful state and condemnation before Him and you trusted completely and solely in Christ's atoning sacrifice. We began by seeking forgiveness of our sins, which was purchased at the cross and freely given. But, brothers and sisters, God has gone the extra mile by not only forgiving us but also bestowing upon us the riches of His grace. Let's look at some Scriptures to see the result of Christ's living out His command in Matthew 5:38-42 to give beyond that which is asked.

#### Questions:

#### Overlooking the offense – the forgiveness of Christ

Luke 23:34

1. What do you admire about Jesus from this verse? (Remember, He has been rejected by His people, deserted and denied by His friends and has just been humiliated by being stripped naked and brutally and mercilessly nailed to the cross to die in indescribable agony...in your place.)

#### Going the second mile – the grace of Christ

What priceless gifts that God has given to us – well beyond the forgiveness of sins – do you see in the following verses?

2. 2 Corinthians 5:17-21
3. Romans 6:3-7
4. Romans 7:23 - 8:1
5. Romans 8:11
6. Romans 8:15-17
7. Romans 8:23
8. Romans 8:26
9. Romans 8:28
10. Romans 8:31
11. Romans 8:32
12. Romans 8:33
13. Romans 8:34
14. Romans 8:35-39

## Answers:

1. Countless responses but here are some of mine (Greg). I admire: Jesus, the manliest man who ever lived – who knew what He faced in Jerusalem and set His face toward it; the humbling thought that I am Christ's prize for his enduring the cross. (Wow, meditate on that one!); how, nailed to a cross, he prayed for the forgiveness of those who put Him there, namely me.
2. You are a new creation. God has not simply restored you to that state which you lost through sin, but has completely remade you. You have received the ministry of reconciliation whereby He has actively involved you in His plan of reconciling others to Him. You are an ambassador for Christ – meaning God has given you authority to represent Him to foreigners (those who don't yet know Him). He has exchanged your sin for His very own righteousness – this goes infinitely beyond forgiveness of sins.
3. When you were saved you were united into Christ's death with Him, breaking the dominion of sin over you; your being united into His death assures that you will be united in Him through His resurrection from the dead; your old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin would be brought to nothing.
4. Despite the ongoing struggle of indwelling sin, right now you stand before God uncondemned!
5. The power that raised Christ from the dead empowers your mortal body!
6. You are adopted into the family of God and are a coheir with Christ – what Christ gets, you get!
7. The promised redemption of your body!
8. The Holy Spirit's intercession on your behalf!
9. The confidence that God's plan for you is good.
10. God is for you!
11. The promise that God will give you all good things!
12. You cannot be charged with anything by anyone ever!
13. Jesus Himself intercedes for you!
14. The assurance of salvation!!

Are you thankful that Christ went the extra mile and when you asked Him to forgive you, He gave you immeasurably more than you asked? There are many, many more promises in His word for you and me to discover.

## Obey

1. Ask God to give you an open heart and willing eyes to see areas in which you need to repent and/or be strengthened by God for obedience to Jesus' command in Matthew 5:38-42.
2. Now that you have studied the Word of God and worshipped Jesus for the way He completely obeyed this biblical command, write out at least one specific way that you can put this principle of "non-retaliation" into practice in your life. You might be able to name several. 😊

## Train

### How to help disciple others:

1. Study Matthew 5:38-42 yourself, ask your disciple(s) to study it, then discuss it and pray about it together.
2. Help your disciple to identify at least one specific way that he or she can put this principle of "non-retaliation" into practice.