

Turning the Other Cheek (Matt. 5:38-42)

A Small Group Outline



1. Praise (Purpose: To worship God)

- What are you thankful for this week? (*let the group's secretary write these down in an A4 hardcover or some notebook*)
- Song Service
 - Sing a few songs of praise to God

2. Pray (Purpose: To carry each others' burdens and to seek the Lord)

- What challenges did you have this week? (*write these down in an A4 hardcover or some notebook*)
- Go into a season of prayer

3. Review (Purpose: To learn accountability)

- Tell us how it went with what you promised to do in last week's meeting? (*e.g. Who did your share your faith with this past week? Who did you minister to? How did actioning your I WILL STATEMENT go?*)
- *Where people have failed to fulfil what they said they would, do not be harsh with them but gently encourage them to try again in the coming week. Give them more support by phoning or joining them in the week.*

4. Give (Purpose: To be good stewards of our monies)

- This is the time to return tithes and offerings. If done electronically, kindly ensure that you get the bank account details of your local church from your treasurer. Don't forget to complete an envelope and to send the breakdown to him/her.

5. Discover (Purpose: To learn to listen to God, and be obedient to His Word)

- **Notes for the facilitator**

- Read *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings (MB)*, pp. 69-73
- Vs 38: Eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, also known as *lex talionis* (see Deut. 19:16-21):
 - Firstly, this Old Testament law put *limits* on retaliation. For example, if a tooth was lost during a fight, the punishment for the perpetrator was *only* a tooth. This law prevented unregulated retaliation which often escalates into *increasing* brutality. E.g. Someone may strike an enemy, causing him to lose a tooth. The victim may then fetch his brother to beat up that person. This in turn, could lead the new victim to get family reinforcement. Warring families could lead to tribal conflict, and ultimately death - all because of a tooth. Thus *lex talionis* was a wise provision that *limited* the punishment to the injury only.
 - Secondly, the law could not be enforced by individuals, but by governments. (*George Knight, Walking with Jesus on the Mount of Blessing*)
- Vs 39: Resist not an evil person: That is, don't seek revenge for wrongs you have suffered.
- Some reasons for retaliation: Injured pride, rejection, when attacked, etc.
- Even though the law states an eye for an eye (the legal limit of vengeance), the Bible encourages love toward our enemies (Lev. 19:18; Prov. 25:21). In other words, Christians are not to live a life of retaliation and vengeance, but of love and forgiveness.
- Vs 39: Turning the other cheek: Not a literal interpretation, but a reference to a humble, non-avenging spirit that Christians should have. Jesus Himself fully observed the spirit of this command, though He did not literally invite additional injury (John 18:22, 23).
- "Though calumny [false defamatory statements] and persecution were heaped upon Him from the cradle to the grave, they called forth from Him only the expression of forgiving love. Through the prophet Isaiah He says, 'I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and

spitting.’ ‘He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth.’ Isa. 50:6; 53:7. And from the cross of Calvary there come down through the ages His prayer for His murderers and the message of hope to the dying thief.” (MB 71)

- The following verses illustrate that it is better to suffer loss than to fight back: 1 Cor. 6:7; Heb. 10:32-34, 1 Pet. 2:23. Because of the varied and complex circumstances of human life, some situations may demand extended periods of fasting, prayer, searching the Scriptures, and consulting with godly leaders, as to a way forward. Yet no matter how challenging the situation may be, we should still not harbour hatred, unforgiveness and vengeance toward those who have injured us.
- “The Father's presence encircled Christ, and nothing befell Him but that which infinite love permitted for the blessing of the world. Here was His source of comfort, and it is for us. He who is imbued with the Spirit of Christ abides in Christ. The blow that is aimed at him falls upon the Saviour, who surrounds him with His presence. Whatever comes to him comes from Christ. He has no need to resist evil, for Christ is his defense. Nothing can touch him except by our Lord's permission, and “all things” that are permitted ‘work together for good to them that love God.’ Rom. 8:28” (MB 71)
- Vs. 40: Give your cloak as well as your tunic: A tunic was an inner garment of cotton or linen, and the cloak a blanket like garment used as a robe by day and a blanket by night. The average person would have one cloak. Jewish law stated that a tunic could be taken as a pledge, but not a person’s cloak, unless returned by sundown (Ex. 22:26-27). So a cloak could not be permanently taken. So what does Jesus mean in this verse? William Barclay puts it this way: “The Christian thinks not of his rights, but of his duties; not of his privileges, but of his responsibilities.” (*George Knight, Walking with Jesus on the Mount of Blessing*). This is a radical teaching.
- The context of vs. 41: “Collisions between the people [the Jews] and the [Roman] soldiers were frequent, and these inflamed the popular hatred. Often as some Roman official with his guard of soldiers hastened from point to point, he would seize upon the Jewish peasants who were laboring in the field and compel them to carry burdens up the mountainside or render any other service that might be needed. This was in accordance with the Roman law and custom, and resistance to such demands only called forth taunts and cruelty.” (MB 70). What Jesus is saying in this verse? Don’t complainingly do the minimum, but cheerful go beyond the call of duty.
- Turning the other cheek, giving one’s cloak also, and going the second mile – all imply the crucifixion of self.
- Vs 42: Does this mean we should give to every beggar, drunkard, or person who needs a loan? No. Discernment and wise discrimination in giving is still required, but Christ here teaches us to be openhanded and help those in need (Deut. 15:8), and to provide this assistance as a gift rather than a loan (Luke 6:35)
- Vs 42: “When a poor man gave his garment as a pledge, or as security for a debt, the creditor was not permitted to enter the dwelling to obtain it; he must wait in the street for the pledge to be brought to him. And whatever the circumstances the pledge must be returned to its owner at nightfall. Deuteronomy 24:10-13. In the days of Christ these merciful provisions were little regarded; but Jesus taught His disciples to submit to the decision of the court, even though this should demand more than the law of Moses authorized. Though it should demand a part of their raiment, they were to yield. More than this, they were to give to the creditor his due, if necessary surrendering even more than the court gave him authority to seize. ‘If any man would go to law with thee,’ He said, ‘and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.’ R.V. And if the couriers require you to go a mile with them, go two miles.” (MB 72)

- *Read Matt. 5:38-42. Preferably let one person read it. Let everyone then put down their Bibles and get the group to reconstruct the passage in their own words. This teaches the group to be careful in quotation Scripture correctly and to use it as the basis of their discussions.*
- **Discussion Questions** *(use only a few). The notes in italics after some of the questions below are for the facilitator, and not to be read out to the group.*
 - What do you think was the positive intent of this law (eye for an eye) as given in this passage? How could it protect the accused as well as the accuser?
 - Do you believe that personal vengeance has no place in the lives of those who are the children of God? Why, or why not?
 - What are some ways to avoid getting into conflict with others?
 - Comment if you agree on the statement: “If you do hurt people back, you become like them.”
 - What can we do to leave revenge to God and avoid taking things into your own hands?
 - Are there times when it is better to accept injury rather than strike back?
 - How do you feel knowing that God is your Defender and Vindicator, and, therefore, you do not even need to take revenge?
 - What are reasons you may want to forgive the person who wronged you?
 - What are some examples of ways you could go the extra mile to reflect Christ in situations where people are demanding things of you?
 - What do you think the meaning is of Jesus’ lesson about giving one’s cloak as well? What could be a modern application of this principle? *(ask one question at a time)*
 - Why do you think believers struggle to follow the instruction Jesus gives about turning the other cheek, giving one’s cloak, and going the extra mile?
 - How do you understand verse 42? Does it mean indiscriminate giving – to a drug addict, beggar, drunkard, or a person who needs a loan? What is the principle here? *(ask one question at a time)*
- **Application Questions** *(select a few depending on your time. One has to be the I WILL STATEMENT)*
 - Have you ever wronged someone that did not retaliate and seek vengeance but loved you instead? If so, how did this impact you?
 - When someone treats you badly (swears at you, is nasty, rude, embarrasses you, etc.), how do you generally respond?
 - How can this hard teaching from our Lord bring you closer to imitate His nature and character? How can you apply these principles to the situations you face at work, school, in your family, at church, or how people treat you in general? *(ask one question at a time)*
 - Is there someone you are unwilling to forgive, or a situation in which you are determined to seek revenge? How do you think Jesus would instruct you to respond to the person’s insults or persecution? *(ask one question at a time)*
 - Is there a particular person or people you are need to be open handed with? How would Jesus instruct you to loosen your grip on your stuff? *(ask one question at a time)*
 - I WILL STATEMENT: Formulate an I will statement in response to what you have discovered in the Word. Let the group’s secretary also record these in an A4 notebook. Ensure that everyone gets a chance to give their I WILL STATEMENT. You have to be specific. E.g. “When injured, and ready to retaliate, I will stop, walk away, pray, and ask God to help me approach the situation positively. I know I cannot do this in my own strength, but I really want to have Christ’s non-retaliatory and loving character.”

6. Share *(Purpose: To be witnesses of our faith)*

- Do you have anyone you could share today’s lesson with this week? *Be specific.*

7. Closing prayer