

Tough Relationships

Overcoming Bad Passions—part 5

Matthew 5:38-48

August 3, 2014

DAY 1: Revenge?

1. Everyone has someone with whom it is very difficult to get along with, let alone love. Is there someone that comes to your mind?

Matthew 5:38 "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.'"

2. What is the "meaning" usually associated with this verse? Is it usually used in a good way or bad way?

3. Jesus quoted from the Law of Moses. The Law of Moses contained three kinds of law: (1) Civil law (for legal matters), (2) Ceremonial law (how religious matters were to be handled) and (3) Moral law (code of conduct).

4. When Moses wrote this sentence, to which law do you think he was referring?

5. When you read this in Deut. 19 it is clear that Moses' words are meant for the civil authorities. This was written for several major purposes.

- First, it established the role of justice,
- Second, it specified the punishment to be meted out, and
- Third, it set a limit on that punishment. The exact compensation to the victim could not exceed what was lost. Its effect was to *restrain revenge*. You could not take the law into your own hands.

6. This law actually moved the current state of lawlessness toward needed changes and restraint!

7. By the time of Jesus, the Jewish religious leaders took what was meant for civil law and also applied the principle to the arena of personal relationships. The allowed for retribution for both civil matters and personal relationships.

8. There are times when difficult people make our lives very difficult. We are tempted to take revenge and retaliate. Where the law is concerned revenge takes away the civil authority's due process to make things right.

9. Jesus is about to drop a bombshell on the deeper meaning of this verse. Any guesses as to what He'll say?

DAY 2: Insults

1. Our passage of scripture will give us two broad principles to keep in mind when relating to difficult people.

Principle #1: Passive, Non-Retaliation.

Matthew 5:38 "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.'"

Matt. 5:39 "But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. [40] And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. [41] If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. [42] Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you."

2. When people see these verses they usually ask about situations with which these verses do not apply, such as:

- a. "What if a burglar or rapist enters my house?"
- b. "What if I'm unjustly sued?"
- c. "What if someone keeps asking me to do his work just because I have some occasional free time?"
- d. "Am I always supposed to give money to the homeless guy, whether or not he's really 'homeless?'"

3. The main thing to remember in these examples is that there is **a relational component** to them, not just a legal or moral component. He is almost exclusively addressing the relational component with difficult people.

4. Let's take Jesus' first example:

Matt. 5:39 "... If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also."

5. This example has nothing to do with a home invasion where the safety of your family is at stake. In that instance you should call the police (God's intended authority), try to handle the situation without force, but use force if needed to protect your family and yourself.

6. This verse could be used in some of the following examples:

- a. A punk teenager pushes you because you said something to him he didn't like.
- b. Your own teenage daughter slaps your face because you took away her cell phone or car.
- c. An extended family member (on your spouse's side, of course) "went off" in anger toward you, and you wondered if he was about to hit you.

7. In these cases, we are to "*turn the other cheek, also.*"

a. (Remember, this is not when you are *attacked*; this relates to when you're *heavily insulted*.)

b. At a minimum Jesus is saying, "Don't retaliate."

c. But He is saying much more here! If you're thinking relationally, you're thinking of what **attitude** you're wanting to convey. Have you ever been the one who insulted someone else and they did not retaliate? What effect did that have on you?

8. Can you think of a difficult person in your life where this verse would apply to you?

DAY 3: Overcome evil with good

1. Let's look at Jesus' second example.

Matt. 5:39 "But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. [40] And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. [41] If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. [42] Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you."

2. Most people read that verse and focus in the word, "sue." I believe the clue to understanding the real meaning of this verse is found in the words, "tunic," and "cloak."

3. What difference does that make when considering what Jesus means in this verse?

4. Let me illustrate what Jesus is saying to us, by drawing on an experience I had as a second grader. I saw one of my classmates that had a full set of very colorful markers. All I had was a set of colored pencils. My eyes glittered with envy for the markers. In the next hour or so, I surreptitiously tried to take the markers, one-by-one and hide them in my desk.

5. The girl who owned the markers couldn't find the ones she needed, looked all around her desk area and asked the teacher for help.

6. Our teacher realized that someone had stolen them. A quick hunt turned them up--in my desk!

7. Just as the teacher was about to scold me, the girl said, "If Seth doesn't have any colored markers, he can have those, plus these others."

8. The effect of her not only her attitude but offer of a gift that which I had stolen had a profound effect on me. I "repented" of my thievery, gave her back her markers, and gained a loyal friend.

9. What parallels do you see in my story and Matt. 5:40?

10. Another way to think about the verse is this:

a. What would the girl potentially give up by responding as she did?

b. What did the girl gain by her responding as she did?

11. Is there a situation that comes to mind where you can put this principle to work?

DAY 4: 2nd mile principle; giving/loaning

Matt. 5:41 If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.

1. This was a situation that the people in Israel faced during the Roman occupation. A Roman soldier could command any Jew to carry some of his baggage for one mile.

2. What was Jesus saying when you are so commanded?

3. What attitude should you have as you go the "extra mile?"

4. What effect could your surprising attitude have in that situation?

5. How is this situation similar to the one we studied yesterday?

Matt 5:42 "Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you."

6. This does not refer to the person who will not work.

2 Thessalonians 3:10 For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat."

7. Giving to one who will NOT work, or loaning money to someone who will NOT work violates this command, and hurts the man by reinforcing irresponsibility. A question we must always ask is, "Will this help the person toward greater responsibility?"

8. So, what does Jesus mean by these verses? Consider these situations as samples:

- a. Your father or mother came under a financial catastrophe (health, retirement, etc.) and has no way out.
- b. Your non-Christian neighbor lost his job. He is making a good faith effort to find work, including taking a part-time job just to generate some income.
- c. A friend is on disability. He/she cannot work.

9. Usually we think of this verse as "the blank check" verse, giving or loaning whatever is asked. Jesus does not imply a "blank check" in this verse. He is mostly thinking *relationally*.

10. Is there someone in your life where your application of these verses is the right thing to do?

a. The "second mile" principle.

b. The "giving" or "loaning" principle. (A personal word on loans: do not loan money you cannot afford to do without! This adds a bad burden on the friendship).

DAY 5: ACTIVE, INTENTIONAL LOVE

1. There are two great principles in our passage this week:

a. Passive, non-retaliation.

b. Active, intentional love.

Matthew 5:43 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'

⁴⁴ *But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,*

⁴⁵ *that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*

2. The moral standard of the day had been dumbed down to Matt. 5:43. That was considered by men to be moral high ground. How does Jesus torpedo that idea?

3. What are we to aim for, relationally, with our enemies?

4. What rationale does Jesus give for these high standards?

Matthew 5:46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?

⁴⁷ *And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?*

5. If we pat ourselves on the back because we think we're "loving" people, when all we do is love those who love us, how high have we really reached, according to Jesus?

6. Jesus ends this passage with what some think is a puzzling verse:

Matthew 5:48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

7. Do you think Jesus means we're to aim at and arrive at moral perfection in this lifetime?

8. To what specifically does "perfect" refer? (Look back at Matt. 5:45)

9. The challenge to love people is **not** a challenge to "feel loving." (You cannot command a feeling). It is a challenge to act loving, to do things for someone who is difficult to love.

Romans 12:20 On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

Romans 12:21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

10. Put some action in play this week. What is something you can do from this week's study toward one or more difficult people in your life?