

Apprenticed to Jesus: Revenge and Generosity

Matthew 5:38-42

Introduction: "Turn the other cheek" . . . a wonderful principle . . . a lofty ideal . . . but, oh, what a hard thing to do when WE are personally confronted with an opportunity to apply it. Then it seems downright unfair! Impractical! And yet, this is exactly what Jesus teaches. In this world, where personal offense is often experienced, Jesus calls us to a kind of righteousness that does not return evil for evil. He calls us to a kind of righteousness that does not seek to get even, but to be generous instead. This is the way of Jesus. Will we follow Him?

Opening Discussion: Can you think of a way you were wronged this past week?

Read Exodus 21:23-25

1. How would you describe the principle of "exact retribution" that is taught in this passage?
2. What good purpose did this principle of "exact retribution" serve?
3. What is so appealing about revenge at times?

Matthew 5:38-42

4. What does Jesus command in this passage and how does it alter the "exact retribution" principle?
5. What examples does Jesus give of not resisting the evil person?
6. In what ways did Jesus, himself, model what he taught in this passage?
7. How would you summarize the way we are to respond to those who do evil to us?

Steve said:

So how does Jesus' teaching apply in everyday life? The tendency is to focus on all the difficult scenarios. And there's certainly a place for that. But we shouldn't let the "hard cases" keep us from obvious applications of Jesus' teaching in everyday life. I'm thinking about scenarios when the only casualty of replacing revenge/retaliation with generosity is our **pride**; the only thing injured is our pride and our personal sense of being wronged.

Basically my challenge is to test-drive Jesus' teaching in your everyday life. . . . Try to live out Jesus' teaching right where you are. For example, you may work with somebody who is disagreeable, who often says things that insult or offend you. What about the possibility of turning the other cheek and going the extra mile with that person. If you're in the habit of retaliating, your newfound generosity may be a striking thing. The other person may or may not change, but at least you've put yourself in a position to show them a better way.

8. Have you struggled with any of the "hard cases" where it has been difficult to know how to apply Jesus' teaching?
9. Do you have any scenarios right now in which the application of Jesus' teaching is pretty clear? In other words, where do you know you need to replace an attitude of revenge/retaliation with generosity?
10. What will it look like to let go of your pride in this situation?

Steve said:

[Jesus] wants us to come face to face with the question, "Am I willing to give up my rights and my sense of fairness in order to be like Jesus?" Which is more important revenge or following Jesus?

11. How would you respond to these questions?
12. Is there a step that you sense God would have you take this week to follow Jesus?