

LIFE. DIFFERENT.

WHAT IF **GOD** TOOK OVER?

Raising The Bar: Love Your Enemies

MATTHEW 5:38-48

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 someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.

And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. "Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you."

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You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, 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.

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If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

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DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE

“Do not resist an evil person.” ~Verse 39a

“Resist”: from *anthistemi* (ἀνθίστημι) = To set against or oppose someone who has done harm by feeling resentful and acting vengefully.

Non-resistance: *Turn the other cheek (v. 39), give the shirt off your back (v. 40), go the second mile (v. 41), give them what they want. (v. 42)*

DIFFICULT PEOPLE

1. The Hitter—Assaults your dignity

JESUS' SOLUTION:

*“If someone strikes you on the right cheek,
turn to him the other also.”*

~Verse 39b

DIFFICULT PEOPLE

2. The Taker—Assaults your security

JESUS' SOLUTION:

*“And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic,
let him have your cloak as well.”*

~Verse 40

DIFFICULT PEOPLE

3. The Intimidator—Assaults your liberty

JESUS' SOLUTION:

*“If someone forces you to go one mile,
go with him two miles.”*

~Verse 41

DIFFICULT PEOPLE

4. The Drainer—Assaults your possessions

JESUS' SOLUTION:

“Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.”

~Verse 42

MAKING SENSE OF JESUS

Pay attention to rules of interpretation:

- Identify figures of speech: Jesus is using hyperbole—exaggeration for effect.
- Interpret Scripture with Scripture: Harmonize Jesus' admonitions with other relevant texts.

WHAT JESUS IS AFTER

Jesus is not asking us to be a Christian doormat, speaking against healthy boundaries with authoritarian, abusive or co-dependant people, or advocating irresponsible giving.

- Jesus is asking us to embrace an altogether higher law—the law of love.
- *“Love your enemies.”* ~Matthew 5:44

JESUS AND THE LAW OF LOVE

1. Storge—the love of a family
2. Eros—the passionate love of irresistible longing
3. Phelos—the love of the most tender affection
4. Agape—an unconquerable, benevolent, invincible, reconciling loving-kindness

Agape requires mainly something of the will — something we will likely have to will ourselves into.

- *Agape* is a victory over that which comes instinctively to us by nature—which is anger, resentment and retribution toward hurtful people.
- *“It belongs to the children of God to receive blows rather than to inflict them. The [loving] Christian is the anvil that has worn out many hammers.” ~Anonymous*

LEX TALIONIS

- *Lex Talionis* — the law of “*tit-for-tat*” — required punishment to exactly match the crime.
- Old Testament law never allowed an individual to take that law into his own hands and apply it personally. It was to be applied in civil court.
- *Lex Talionis* was meant to prevent and break the cycle of personal revenge.

LEX TALIONIS OR THE LAW OF LOVE

- Jesus was saying that this “*eye for eye*” law was a matter for the civil courts, not for interpersonal relationships.
- In a relational offense, to turn the other cheek is an invitation to reconcile.
- The *law of love* breaks the cycle of retribution by seeking reconciliation.

THE LAW OF LOVE

“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

~Matthew 5:48

- *“Perfect”* — telios (τέλειος): Functional perfection; accomplishing the purpose for which it was designed.
- *“Perfection”* is to accomplish the purpose for which God made us, redeemed us and has now sent us into the world, particularly as agents of reconciled relationships.



Gire Daba's Widow



The Murderer's Wife

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