



Doing Right By Others/Healthy Relationships

In this study, we are continuing to look through the examples that Jesus gave from the law and how he continued to point to what the kingdom of God and the heart of God looks like.

Oaths and Integrity

Matthew 5:33-37

33 "Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.' 34 But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; 35 or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. 36 And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. 37 All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one. [a]

References to you have heard it said can be found in: Numbers 30:1-2, Deuteronomy 23:21-23, Leviticus 19:11-12.

Questions:

What is an oath?

What does Jesus add to 'you have heard it said' in this passage? Why do you think he expounded on this teaching of the law? Does Jesus contradict what they had heard?

What did Jesus mean in verse 37? (Also found in James 5:12)

Have you ever verbally committed to something and did not carry through? Have you ever made a promise and did not keep your word? Why do you think as followers of Jesus Christ, it is important to keep your word?

In his commentary, Warren Wiersbe states. *"Jesus taught that our conversation should be so honest, and our character so true, that we would not need "crutches" to get people to believe us. Words depend on character, and oaths cannot compensate for poor character."*

Proverbs 10:19, James 1:26

Some quotes to ponder as you think on Jesus's teachings on oaths and integrity:

"What if my character was so clear that people knew that what we say was our bond." -Jen Wilkin

*“Being a peacemaker starts with a radical commitment to honesty and integrity.”
-The Bible Project*

For Further Study:

There are stories in the Bible where rash oaths made by people brought death instead of life. An oath made by Jephthah found in Judges 11 and an oath made by Saul found in 1 Samuel 14:24-46

Retaliation

Matthew 4:38-42

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

This law can be found in Exodus 21:23-25, Leviticus:24:20, Deuteronomy 19:21. The law is known as the lex talionis or the law of retaliation. God’s wisdom behind this law is that people should be fairly compensated if they had been wronged, but not more than what was fair. For example, it would not be a life for a tooth, which in turn would be an example of vengeance instead of justice. Jesus expounds on this law further by teaching us to not strike back, give more than is fair and to go the extra mile. In all of these instances, we are choosing to not retaliate but are allowing God to take care of the injustices.

Refer to Romans 12:17-21

Clip from The Chosen Season 4: Going an extra mile

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R3FmYv9uOJk>

Article on What Jesus Meant by “Turn the Other Cheek” in Matthew 5:39.

<https://bibleproject.com/arti-cles/what-jesus-meant-turn-other-cheek-matthew-539/>

Questions:

How are we as followers of Jesus to respond to injustice?

How can we as followers of Jesus respond in a way that reflects justice and the generosity of God?

Can you think of 2 different times in the Bible where incredible injustice occurred, but instead of retaliation, they showed mercy? (hint: 1 in the Old Testament and another in the New Testament)

Is there someone toward whom you are afraid or un-willing to practice non-retaliation? How would Jesus want you to respond to that person’s insults or persecution?

Quote to ponder:

“The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it...Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars.” Martin Luther King Jr.

Love for Enemies

Matthew 5:43-48

43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor [a] and hate your enemy.’ 44 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be children 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. 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 own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? 48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Questions:

The Pharisees were teaching to love your neighbor (Leviticus 19:18) but that Israel’s enemies should be hated. But Jesus tells us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

Why does Jesus tell us to love our enemies and to go one step further and pray for them too? Have you ever sincerely prayed for someone you would consider an enemy? How did it change your heart in the matter?

What does Jesus mean in verses 45 when He says that God causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous? How can we as followers of Jesus be different than the world by loving our enemies?

In verse 48, Jesus calls us to be perfect, therefore as your heavenly Father is perfect. That is a very high calling. What do think Jesus is asking of His followers? What beatitude do you think could correlate to this verse?

As we continue to study the sermon on the mount, Jesus is calling us to represent His Kingdom which is so radically different than the world. He calls us to a journey of transformation (Romans 12:2) so that we can be a reflection (1 Peter 1:13-22) of the heart of God to others.

Prepared by Laurie Tall