

Housegroup Study – January 3rd 2018

Leaders Notes

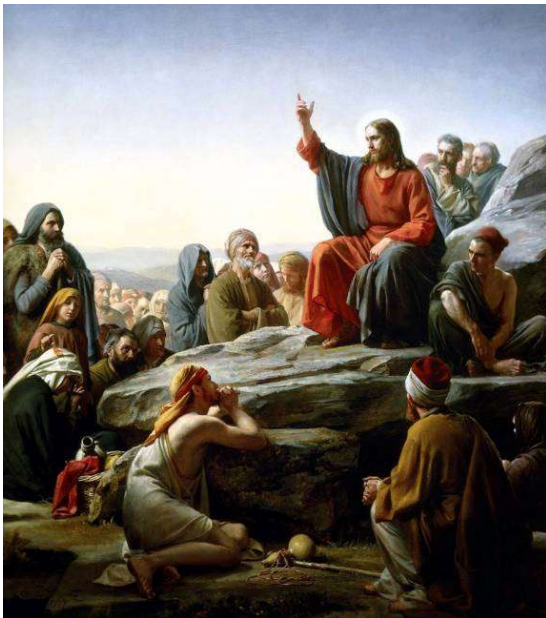
Matthew 5: 38-48

Theme: A disciple of Jesus Christ responds to insults and bad treatment very differently from other people and it shows. Why does Jesus expect his disciples to be so different?

Sermon on the Mount

“It is possible for us to so progressively grow in our faith that all of the characteristics of the Sermon on the Mount become progressively evident in our lives. Jesus believes we can consistently reflect the Sermon’s extraordinary level with his help.”

R. Kent Hughes



Matthew 5:3–12 the Beatitudes: the character of the people of the Kingdom of Heaven – its "blessing" or "happiness".

Matthew 5:13–16 salt and light.

The longest discourse in the Sermon is **Matthew 5:17–48**, Jesus fulfils and reinterprets the Old Covenant and in particular its Ten Commandments, contrasting with what "you have heard" from others.

In **Matthew 6** Jesus condemns doing what would normally be "good works" simply for recognition and not from the heart, such as those of alms (6:1–4), prayer (6:5–15), and fasting (6:16–18). The discourse goes on to condemn the superficiality of materialism and call the disciples not to worry about material needs, but to "seek" God's kingdom first.

Matthew 7:1–6 deals with judging. Jesus condemns those who judge others before first judging themselves.

Matthew 7:7–29 Jesus concludes the sermon by warning against false prophets, and emphasizing that we are unable to do right ("bear fruit") apart from God.

Q1: How do you behave when someone treats you badly (especially when they do so because they know you follow Jesus).

This term continues the study of Matthew’s gospel started in Spring 2017.

January 3rd

January 17th

January 31st

February 14th

February 21st

March 7th

March 21st

April 4th

Matthew 5: 38-48

Matthew 6: 1-4, 19-34

Matthew 6: 15-18

Matthew 7: 1-14

Matthew 7: 15-29

Matthew 8: 1-22

Matthew 8: 23-34, 9: 1-17

Matthew 9: 18-34

Matthew 5: 38-42 Wrongs and Rights

How is a disciple, clothed in the righteousness of Christ, supposed to react to personal offence? Today, retaliation is expected behaviour especially for leaders. Jesus commands a different response.

Jesus quotes 3 OT passages (Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20; Deuteronomy 19:21) – the Lex (Law) Talionis (retaliation) – the law of retaliation. This Jewish practise was intrinsically merciful because it stopped the “tit for tat” behaviour which escalates until it ends in murder or genocide. It did away with this (in paper at least) – the punishment should fit the crime! It was carefully administered by Jewish courts (For example: not counting the removal of a bad tooth as a fit punishment for the crime of knocking out a perfectly good tooth.) The law of retaliation was good and fair and carefully administered justice.

Why then does Jesus appear to undermine this fair law by saying “Do not resist an evil person”? Is he calling for an end to law and order and turning a blind eye to evil behaviour? Must we all abandon the law of retribution and allow evil regimes and evil acts to rule over us?

Romans 13: 1-7

Submission to the Authorities

1. Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.
2. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.
3. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval,
4. for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.
5. Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience.
6. For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing.
7. Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honour to whom honour is owed.

Romans 13:1-7 teaches that the state is a divine institution that has the power to punish wrongdoers. This is only possible with the use of force. The problem comes when we apply Jesus' teaching without paying attention to the context, the flow of the argument, and the specific social implications of the time.

Jesus clarified what he means “to not resist an evil person” with 4 illustrations. Each one is culturally specific but they also give us general principles for living today. But these principles are not for everyone, but only for those who follow Christ.

Read Matthew 5: 38-42

Retaliation

38. "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'
39. But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.
40. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.
41. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.
42. Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.

Responding to insult (v. 39b)

Q2. What is Jesus describing here?

Jesus is describing a very traditional, calculated insult (not a physical attack!). The right cheek signifies someone being slapped by the back of the hand. To a Jew being hit by the back of the hand was twice as insulting. It would

mean that you were considered a nobody – and what Jesus is saying – considered a nobody because you are a follower of Christ. If you were a Jew, you could seek damages in the law courts for loss of face.

Q3. What does this mean for us when we are insulted or abused for Christ's sake?

Jesus says, do not take him to court, do not seek compensation, absorb the insult, overcome the evil and forgive the injustice. When we are insulted because we are Christians we must not respond by getting even, by getting our legal pound of flesh according to the Lex Talionis. If you are dishonoured as a heretic, do not go to the law court, rather you should show that you are a true disciple of Jesus by bearing the hatred and forgiving the offense.

Q4. Might we apply this to domestic situations? For example where your spouse is messy, how do you behave towards them? If your friend is late, will you be late yourself next time?

Jesus teaches us to abandon a tit for tat approach, and to also abandon a just, measured, like for like response as outlined in the Lex Talionis. Instead we are set aside our pettiness and stop trying to get even. We can apply this principle more widely although that is not the context here. In our marriages and family life we should abandon trying to get even and be kind to everyone who abuses us.

Q5: If you were in a position of authority (policeman) would you behave differently when in and out of uniform?

It is necessary to distinguish between personal and civil context. Jesus is specifically talking about personal behaviour. The passage from Romans makes it clear that the state has the divine authority and responsibility to punish wrongdoers. In uniform, the policeman is acting as an agent of the state.

Q6: Does this rule out the use of "reasonable force" to prevent further damage to oneself or other?

Absolutely not. Acting to prevent further damage to oneself or others can be considered to be an act of love.

Responding to a rip-off (v. 40)

Q7. What is Jesus describing here?

It was possible in those days to sue someone for the very shirt on their backs. However, no-one was permitted to take someone's cloak for a permanent 24 hours a day possession. A cloak or outer robe was indispensable for living in Palestine. So even if you lost your shirt in court and your opponent asked for your cloak and won it, he had to return it every evening for you to sleep in.

Evidently Jesus is referring to the poor among his followers who have been reduced to the garments they wear because of persecution for their faith. "As they sue you (no doubt falsely) for your shirt and win it, give them your cloak also, even though they cannot legally take it." This radical discipleship is meant to point their persecutors to Jesus

Q8. What does this mean for us when we are ripped-off for Christ's sake?

This is a radical call for those who are suffering persecution for Christ. Extreme advice for extreme circumstances. It doesn't mean that we should abandon all our consumer rights when offered shoddy goods. This is a Christian response to extreme persecution of believers. Romans 12:17-21 tells us the right response to our "enemies". "Do not repay anyone evil for evil.... But overcome evil with good"

Q9. Might we apply this to domestic situations?

You might consider your response to an unbelieving family member who treats you badly or unfairly because of your faith. It's about laying aside a sense of injustice and showing love – Jesus love to the offender. But this is stretching application beyond the context.

Responding to forced labour (v. 41)

Q10. What is Jesus describing here?

In occupied Palestine, any Roman could requisition a Jew to carry a burden for a mile. The Jews hated it – it was a reminder that they were subservient. Jesus tells his followers to embrace this "disgrace" and go beyond the call of duty and do extra – thus showing that you serve a higher master than the emperor.

Q11. What does this mean for us if we are unfairly forced to work (over and beyond) for Christ's sake?

Our cheerful response points to Christ who enables us to do more than we might think possible.

Responding to borrowing (v. 42)

Q12. What is Jesus describing here?

Here is persecution from those who are deliberately targeting Christians by borrowing things and either returning them late or not at all. Jesus' advice is not a set of mechanical rules, but principles for meeting the personal wrongs that come to those who follow him. In the matter of loaning, the Lord wants his followers to reject a tight-fisted, penny pinching attitude that says, "This is mine, hands off!"

It doesn't mean that we lend money to the street beggar or the gambler who would be worse off for our thoughtless loan – and get further into debt or addiction.

Q13. What does this mean for us if people are attempting to hurt us by borrowing?

The test – how can I be most loving towards this person. All I have belongs to Christ and would He want me to share it, have it abused or not? How can I love this person as Christ loves them?

Read Matthew 5: 43-48

Love Your Enemies

43. "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.'
44. But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,
45. so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.
46. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?
47. And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?
48. You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

You have heard... (v. 43)

Q14. You have heard that it was said, "Love your neighbour and hate your enemy". Where does this teaching come from?

NOT from the Bible. Jesus was highlighting a Jewish practice that was never in God's plan. The Jews were supposed to show God's nature to the nations. You don't do that by hating them.

Leviticus 19:16-18 & 34

16. You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand up against the life of your neighbour: I am the Lord.
17. "You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbour, lest you incur sin because of him.
18. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the Lord.
34. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.

Exodus 23:4-5

4. "If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, you shall bring it back to him. 5
5. If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying down under its burden, you shall refrain from leaving him with it; you shall rescue it with him.

But I say... (v. 44-48)

Q15. Jesus commanded a love without limits, which loves everyone regardless of what they say or do to us. What two reasons does he give for this?

First is because it shows that we are part of God's family and we live according to our Heavenly Father's generosity. We are sons of our Father. We have the family traits.

Second is that it distinguishes us from the world. Tax collectors were hated collaborators and if we only have the same standards as they do then we are missing the point. If our behaviour only matches theirs then we are the same as the world but we are called out of this world to a new way of living.

Q16. How would you describe this kind of love to someone who doesn't understand what Jesus means?

It is "more than" love. Not the same as the world's love. Is there something special and unique about my love to others that is not present in the life of an unbeliever?

Q17. Why does Jesus command his disciples to be perfect when he knows they will fail to be so?

To return evil for good is devilish. To return good for good is human. To return good for evil is divine.

So, Jesus commands us to be perfect like God. There is no other standard worth aiming for – when we get to heaven we will experience it perfectly but for the moment we must agree with this standard and adjust our lives to match it. Impossible in our own strength but supernaturally possible in His strength.

Matthew 5: 38-48

NIV	ESV	ESV Study Bible	AMP	Message
<p>Eye for Eye</p> <p>38 "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.'</p>	<p>Retaliation</p> <p>38 "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'</p>	<p>Matt. 5:38 eye for an eye. This "law of retaliation" (Latin <i>lex talionis</i>) was God's means of maintaining justice and purging evil from among his people (see Deut. 19:20–21). It was intended to prevent inappropriate punishment (the punishment should fit the crime) and was imposed by civil authorities rather than individuals.</p>	<p>38 "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth [punishment that fits the offense].'</p>	<p>Love Your Enemies</p> <p>38-42 "Here's another old saying that deserves a second look: 'Eye for eye, tooth for tooth.' Is that going to get us anywhere? Here's what I propose: 'Don't hit back at all.' If someone strikes you, stand there and take it. If someone drags you into court and sues for the shirt off your back, gift wrap your best coat and make a present of it. And if someone takes unfair advantage of you, use the occasion to practice the servant life. No more tit-for-tat stuff. Live generously.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>39 But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.</p>	<p>Matt. 5:39 Do not resist the one who is evil. Jesus is not prohibiting the use of force by governments, police, or soldiers when combating evil (see notes on Luke 3:12–14; Rom. 13:1–4; 1 Pet. 2:13–14). Rather, Jesus' focus here is on individual conduct, as indicated by the contrast with Matt. 5:38, which shows that he is prohibiting the universal human tendency to seek personal revenge (see note on Rom. 12:19). If anyone slaps you on the right cheek pictures a backhanded slap given as an insult (a right-handed person would use the back of the hand to slap someone on the right cheek; cf. Mishnah, <i>Baba Kamma</i> 8.6). The word "slaps" translates Gk. <i>rhapizō</i>, "to slap, to strike with the open hand." turn to him the other also. One should not return an insulting slap, which would lead to escalating violence. In the case of a more serious assault, Jesus' words should not be taken to prohibit self-defence (see Luke 12:11; 22:36–38; Acts 22:1; 24:10) or fleeing from evil (see 1 Sam. 19:10; Luke 4:29–30; John 8:59; 10:39; 2 Cor. 11:32–33), for often a failure to resist a violent attack leads to even more serious abuse. Acting in love toward an attacker (Matt. 5:44; 22:39) will often include taking steps to prevent him from attempting further attacks. Jesus' teaching must be applied with</p>	<p>39 But I say to you, do not resist an evil person [who insults you or violates your rights]; but whoever slaps you on the right cheek, turn the other toward him also [simply ignore insignificant insults or trivial losses and do not bother to retaliate--maintain your dignity, your self-respect, your poise].</p>	

		wisdom in the light of related Scriptures that address similar situations (cf. note on 5:42).		
40 And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well.	40 And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.		40 If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also [for the Lord repays the offender].	
41 If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles.	41 And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.		41 And whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two.	
42 Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.	42 Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.	Matt. 5:42 Give to the one who begs from you. Christians should help those who are truly needy (and therefore forced to beg), but they are not required to give foolishly (cf. 7:6) or to a lazy person who is not in need (2 Thess. 3:10), or where giving would bring harm rather than benefit.	42 Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.	
Love For Enemies	Love Your Enemies			
43 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.'	43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.'	Matt. 5:43 You have heard that it was said ... hate your enemy. The OT never says that anyone should hate his or her enemy. This shows that, in his "you have heard" statements (vv. 21, 27, 33, 38, 43), Jesus is correcting not the OT itself but only misinterpretations of the OT. God's hatred of evil was a central theme in the OT (e.g., Ps. 5:4-5). Consequently, those who embodied evil were understood to be God's enemies, and it was natural to hate them (cf. Ps. 26:4-5; 139:21-22), but such hatred is never commanded by God.	43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor (fellow man) and hate your enemy.'	43-47 "You're familiar with the old written law, 'Love your friend,' and its unwritten companion, 'Hate your enemy.' I'm challenging that. I'm telling you to love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst. When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the energies of prayer, for then you are working out of your true selves, your God-created selves. This is what God does. He gives his best—the sun to warm and the rain to nourish—to everyone, regardless: the good and bad, the nice and nasty. If all you do is love the lovable, do you expect a bonus? Anybody can do that. If you simply say hello to those who greet you, do you expect a medal? Any run-of-the-mill sinner does that.
44 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,	44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,	Matt. 5:44 Love your enemies. God hates evil, but he still brings many blessings in this life even to his enemies (v. 45) by means of "common grace" (the favor that he gives to all people and not just to believers). These blessings are intended to lead unbelievers to repentance (Acts 14:17; Rom. 2:4). Of course there is a sense in which God hates those who are resolutely and impenitently wicked (cf. Ps. 5:5; 11:5; Eph. 2:3), but God's blessings of common grace constitute	44 But I say to you, love [that is, unselfishly seek the best or higher good for] your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,	

		his primary providential action toward mankind here and now.		
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.	45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.	Matt. 5:45 sons. The children of the heavenly Father are those who respond to his will as expressed in the ministry of Jesus (cf. 12:48–50). (Regarding “sons” [Gk. <i>huios</i>], see ESV Preface .) sun ... rain. God shows grace and care for all of his creatures; therefore, Jesus’ disciples are to imitate God and love both neighbour and enemy.	45 so that you may [show yourselves to] be the children of your Father who is in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on those who are evil and on those who are good, and makes the rain fall on the righteous [those who are morally upright] and the unrighteous [the unrepentant, those who oppose Him].	
46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?	46 For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?	Matt. 5:46–47 In Palestine, tax collectors were representatives of the Roman governing authorities. Their tendency to resort to extortion made them despised and hated by their own people (cf. Luke 19:8). Christians should not merely do the same as unbelievers; their transformed lives should result in behaviour that shows significantly greater love.	46 For if you love [only] those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do that?	
47 And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?	47 And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?		47 And if you greet only your brothers [wishing them God’s blessing and peace], what more [than others] are you doing? Do not even the Gentiles [who do not know the Lord] do that?	
48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.	48 You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.	Matt. 5:48 be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. Scripture is a reflection of God himself as he has made his will and character known to his people. As Christians seek to live in conformity to Scripture, they are in fact pursuing the very perfection of God. This verse provides the conclusion and summary to the antithesis section (vv. 21–48), showing that all of the Law and the Prophets find their perfect (Gk. <i>teleios</i>) fulfilment in the perfection of the Father, which is what all Jesus’ disciples are called to pursue.	48 You, therefore, will be perfect [growing into spiritual maturity both in mind and character, actively integrating godly values into your daily life], as your heavenly Father is perfect.	48 “In a word, what I’m saying is, Grow up. You’re kingdom subjects. Now live like it. Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you.”