

Vengeance

BIG IDEA:

In the old way of thinking, everything has to be fair. The transformed life insists that I am willing to lay down my own desire for retribution, and instead return hostility with grace and kindness.

There are three ways of taking the command to turn the other cheek. One is the Pacifist interpretation; it means what it says and imposes a duty of nonresistance on all men in all circumstances. Another is the minimizing interpretation; it does not mean what it says but is merely an orientally hyperbolic way of saying that you should put up with a lot and be placable. Both you and I agree in rejecting this view. The conflict is therefore between the Pacifist interpretation and a third one which I am now going to propound. I think the text means exactly what it says, but with an understood reservation in favour of those obviously exceptional cases which every hearer would naturally assume to be exceptions without being told . . . That is, insofar as the only relevant factors in the case are an injury to me by my neighbor and a desire on my part to retaliate, then I hold that Christianity commands the absolute mortification of that desire. No quarter whatever is given to the voice within us which says, "He's done it to me, so I'll do the same to him."

C. S. Lewis

In "Why I Am Not a Pacifist" (*The Weight of Glory*)

I LOVE
BUNNS
WHORES
TERRORISTS

DRUNKS
ADDICTS
PERVERTS
HATERS

ABORTION DOCTORS

SCAM ARTISTS

CHEATERS

MURDERS
CUZ CHRIST

LOVED
ME
LOVE

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READ

Read Genesis 4:1-14. In this familiar story, consider how you might be like Cain.

Many years ago, there was a period of time where I was very angry, bitter and insecure. A situation arose at my workplace where an innocent employee questioned a decision I made. Having my frame of mind compromised already, I received the question as an attack. I defended my position which ignited a heated confrontation. I held strong in defense until he became extremely frustrated and screamed (while cursing me) "I quit". I felt just and satisfied that he deserved what he received. About a year later, God brought to my mind the incident and led me to the understanding that my heart was corrupt with anger and took action against an undeserving person. He made it clear to me that I allowed the incident to escalate in order to satisfy the sick desire of my heart. The man who had 4 kids, one of them special needs, lost all his health benefits because of my angry heart . Vengeance never tasted so bitter.

Prepare

Have you ever been so jealous/ angry/ bitter that you wanted to hurt someone? What actions did you take against the person?

What events were going on in your life during this time of jealousy?

Have you ever been on a quest for vengeance and been stopped by someone/ something? What stopped you? Did your anger subside? (Read 1 Sam 25: 1-35)

Have you ever felt justified to attack “someone who deserves it”? Were you satisfied when it was completed? (Read 2 Sam 13 & 14)

Where do we go from here?

Who is the person in your life that you most want to get revenge from? Take a couple minutes right now and prayerfully ask for God’s blessing on them.

In the old way of thinking, everything has to be fair. The transformed life insists that I am willing to lay down my own desire for retribution, and instead return hostility with grace and kindness.

READ

Matthew 5:38-42

Listening to Jesus' words here, I imagine someone thinking of their own situation saying: "Right, you have no idea what it is like to be unfairly beaten, or being accused of a lie, or abandoned by your friends. Has this man faced a cruel death of a loved one or had a daughter raped? Let's see him love his enemy when his feet are held to the fire". Reading through the trial and death of Jesus, the wickedest crime ever committed, Jesus lived out his words spoken in Matt 5: He did not get angry at his friends when they abandoned him (Matt 26:56). He did not cry foul when the Sanhedrin falsely accused and held an illegal trial (Matt 26: 57-63) He did not defend himself when struck (Matt 26:67-68) Though scorned, beaten, abandoned, ridiculed and nailed to the cross, he asked that his aggressors be forgiven (Luke 23:34). It must be understood that Jesus, though fully God, functioned as a human. He could have operated under His own will but desired to please the Father by submitting His will to the Father's.

Prepare

How outrageous does Jesus' submission seem to you?

What's the worst that you have had to endure in your life? How does it compare to what Jesus experienced?

What enabled Jesus to respond in the fashion that He did?

As a follower of Christ, indwelt with the same Spirit that Jesus was operating under, what is keeping you back from loving your enemies in the same way that Jesus loved His?

Where do we go from here?

Hearing a sermon is one thing, seeing a sermon acted out is another. Who in your life needs to see a sermon in you? Determine one person - probably the person you prayed for in the last devotional - that you can show the love of Christ to who would least expect seeing it from you. Now, plan one action today that you can do for that person that would reflect the love of Christ.

Chapel Scripture

Thursday, November 18

MATTHEW 5:38-42 (NIV)

38”You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’
39But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. 41If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. 42Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

What we're singing

“Spring of Life” by Kristian Stanfill

Spring of Life is a wonderful song talking about how Jesus is eternal. The main idea for this song comes from John 4:14, which says, “but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” The verses also express the fact that worldly things will never satisfy us, and Jesus is the only way to obtain true satisfaction.

Notes:

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READ

John 14:15-31

I experienced the following recently: An employee was caught in a lie and worked to deceive me. In an attempt to teach him a better way of doing things he recognized he was “found out” and became irate. He was very aggressive and leaned into me shouting his defense. I stayed quiet. A few days later, I asked a contractor, who was doing a project in my warehouse, an innocent question. He instantly became insane screaming at me some very horrific words. I stood quiet. The following day, at a Tribe-Yankee ballgame, a drunk made a comment about my wife. I heard it, resisted my desire to react, and stayed quiet. “Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ”. Paul wrote these words in 1 Cor. 11:1. What does this mean to you? Stop and think about this question. Now, for the rest of my story from above.... In each instant I was crying out to the Spirit of God to rescue me! In each situation I was telling Him what I wanted to do in the flesh, but was willing to SUBMIT myself to His leading. In my actions I was following Paul’s call in 1 Cor 11:1.

Reflect

What does imitating Christ look like to you?

As you look at your life patterns, do you see His work in you?

Do you see patterns in your life that you know are fruits of the flesh?

Have you ever experienced the Holy Spirit lead you in a different pattern?

Where do we go from here?

The Christian life is lived, moment by moment, being transformed into the likeness of Christ through the working of His Spirit who is one with us. As we submit our will to His, we see His power working through us so we can live as He calls us to in Matt 5, 6 AND 7. Now, go to the person that you have labeled as your enemy, and do the kind thing that you set out in the last devotional.