

Retaliation

Scripture Reading — Matthew 5:38-48

*"Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also."
Matt. 5:39 —*

During my college days I lived in an apartment across the street from a small church. Every Wednesday night the congregation came together for worship. The music was loud, and the preaching was fervent. Occasionally I worshiped with that little church, and I remember one sermon particularly well. The preacher gave a message on loving those who hate you.

"When someone spits you in the face," he shouted, "don't spit back. Look to Jesus. When someone pushes you off the road, don't push back. Look to Jesus. When someone hits you, don't hit back. Look to Jesus." I think this preacher, who had often suffered racial discrimination, understood well what Jesus is telling us in our reading for today.

Martin Luther King wrote, "Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend." Often in my ministry I have seen how bitterness builds walls, anger brings separation, and revenge brings pain. Some people are prisoners of their own hate and anger. The only bridge I know that will restore a broken relationship is love. That's what God did to bring us back to himself. He loved us.

I know it's hard to love someone who is hostile, but we have to remember that we are not always lovable either--and yet God loves us. (See Romans 5:8-10.)

Prayer

Lord, it's often difficult to obey what Jesus teaches here. Give us grace to deal in a loving way with unloving people. Thank you for dealing gently with us. For Jesus' sake, Amen.

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Written by Jerry Hoytema — <https://today.reframemedia.com/authors/jerry-hoytema>

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