

# DNA DISCUSSION GUIDE

## SERMON ON THE MOUNT SERIES 2: THE WAY OF JESUS



### THE WAY OF JESUS: RETALIATION

Matthew 5:38-42

#### INTRO

In his next illustration, Jesus references what is called the *lex talionis* - the law of retribution - captured in the statement: 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth'. This was given to the judges in Israel by God through Moses in order to execute justice and limit personal revenge. The tendency of the human heart due to sin is to not merely want justice but vengeful retribution that goes beyond what another deserves. Unfortunately, this only escalates the violence instead of limiting it.

Once again Jesus states a command they have heard and then goes deeper to the way of Jesus' Kingdom. The tendency for all of us when facing evil is to fight or flight. We either fight back which leads to an ongoing cycle of violence or we run away or hide and allow evil to continue. Both stem from pride - one show in power and the other expressed in passivity. Jesus offers a third and better way.

In the first three examples Jesus provides, his commanded responses allow the heart of the evil doer to be exposed. If their desire is not just to insult but injure, offering the other cheek when slapped on the right will reveal their evil intent more clearly or it may provide an opportunity for a de-escalation of violence. If they are greedy, they will not just take your shirt but also your coat that provides you with warmth at night, leaving you naked and exposed. And if they are exerting their rights over you to force you to walk one mile, walking two allows you to maintain dignity while also serving, not out of obligation but love. In all cases, Jesus is giving us a dignified way to neither engage in violence or passively become a victim, while also exposing the evil for what it is while we return evil with good. In the last example, Jesus shifts from how we respond to evil done to us to how we respond to what evil has done to others, leaving them in need. The way of Jesus is to meet the very real needs of people with the means we've been given by God.

In the Kingdom of God, kindness absorbs violence, good overcomes evil, love swallow up hate and God's blessing is meant to be shared. That is because our King, King Jesus, did all of this at the cross. At the cross, God exposes evil for what it is. We look to the cross and see how utterly sinful our sin and rebellion is. And we look to the cross and see the one who turned his cheek, was stripped of his garments and went the extra mile for us. At the cross Jesus absorbed violence with kindness, returned evil with good, went to the grave and rose again showing that love truly overcomes hate and then freely gives us what we most need.

## DISCOVER

1. Read Matthew 5:38-42
2. What can you learn about God's character in these verses?
3. How did Jesus fulfill what he is teaching?
4. What kind of people is Jesus leading us to be?

## NURTURE

1. Do you tend toward fight or flight when in response to evil done against you? Why?
2. Which of these responses is hardest for you and why?
3. How might Jesus' response to your evil change your response to others?

## ACT

1. In what ways do you believe God's Spirit is leading you to change how you respond to evil doers?
2. How we help each other remember what Jesus has done and how he wants us to respond?
3. Jesus taught this to his disciples knowing that his mission would lead them to suffer. How can we embrace suffering for the sake of the lost around us? What might that look like in our present situations?