

Retaliation | Family Worship Guide

Matthew 5:38-42



MAIN IDEA: Christians should respond to wrong doings with grace, in remembrance of God's grace shown to them.

PREPARATION:

Can you recall a specific time when you wanted to “get even” with someone? Perhaps a friend slighted you, or a coworker intentionally embarrassed you, or someone betrayed a secret you told them. Did you find a way to repay them? Did it satisfy you to see them feel bad like they made you feel bad?

EXPLANATION:

My 3rd grade teacher Ms. Penny had left her assistant teacher in charge of the classroom while she stepped out to speak to someone in the hallway. Her instructions were simple—keep quiet and work on your worksheet. As one who was always eager to please, I kept my head down trying to see how quickly I could complete my assignment. The pencil sharpener was in the back of the room and one of my classmates regularly used sharpening his pencil as an excuse to get up and roam around. On this particular occasion, as he walked back down the aisle to his seat he decided he would play drums on the desks as he passed, and determined his final note to his drum solo would be to smack the end of his pencil on the back of my head. Pencil grippers and eraser toppers were commonplace, and the added weight from the eraser increased the intensity of the thud on my head. I looked up in shock. My anger surged. I made eye-contact with the assistant teacher; she had evidently missed it. He sat down in front of me, and my temper was hot. “How could he get away with that? Why did he not even care that he hurt my head? Does he think he’s better than me?” I thought all of this as I contemplated how to respond. I waited nearly a minute before I decided I would prove my point. I leaned forward in my desk, reared back my pencil, and smacked the back of his head as hard as I could. He turned around in shock, then looked back at the assistant teacher who clearly saw the incident this time. She pointed to my cup on the wall with my name, and I was required to go up and remove a stick from the cup (the less sticks at the end of the week, the less reward). I was even more furious. I spent the rest of the day complaining in my mind how I got in trouble for what someone else started.

The point of that story was not that I got caught, but that we all feel a strong desire to get even when someone mistreats us. Jesus pointed this wrong tendency out in his disciples’ hearts when he said to them, “Do not resist the one who is evil.” In the sermon on the mount, Christ repeatedly shows the need for us to consider the hearts of others as more important than our own selfish desires. The Jews had twisted the intent of the Mosaic Law “an eye for an eye” to justify personal retribution. Jesus teaches his followers that our love for others is to be radically different than the world’s concept of conditional love. We are to let the Lord do the working out of sin in the offender’s heart, and we are to concern ourselves with our own heart before the Lord. Paul later elaborates on this point in Romans 12:17-21. “Repay no one evil for evil...” In this we act out our trust in the Lord that he will be the bearer of just judgment; and remember that we ourselves are no better than the one we are offended by.

CONVERSATION:

1. What would have been a better response from me when my classmate hit me in the head?
2. How should we prepare our hearts so that when these occasions of injustice happen, we respond as Jesus calls us to?
3. Is there a time recently where we retaliated sinfully against someone and we need to go ask for forgiveness?
4. Is it ever right to defend yourself or others from harm? If so, what did Jesus mean when he said “turn the other cheek?”

APPLICATION:

1. Retaliation does nothing but escalate a situation – which ends up being worse for both people in the end. We must leave vengeance to the Lord.
2. Checking yourself in the moment is much more difficult if you have not already set your heart toward Christ beforehand. Much like hoping to recall the answers to a test when you sit down to take it, we must take in Christ daily so that we can be his aroma as we go about our day.

SUPPLICATION:

Father, just as you later taught us to pray, “forgive us our sins as we forgive those that sin against us” let our own gratitude for the grace you unreservedly showed us, be that which covers the debt of injustice we feel against the wrongs of others toward us. Our forgiven debt is much greater than any amount of sin against us. We thank you for the unrestricted blood of Christ that has washed us anew in you.

EXULTATION:

Holy, Holy, Is What the Angels Sing by Johnson Oatman, 1894.

Hear it in this video: [\(103\) Holy, Holy, Is What The Angels Sing | A cappella Cover - YouTube](#)

Verse 1 There is singing up in heaven such as we have never known, Where the angels sing the praises of the Lamb upon the throne; Their sweet harps are ever tuneful and their voices are always clear, O that we might be more like them while we serve the Master here!

Refrain Holy, holy, is what the angels sing, And I expect to help them make the courts of heaven ring; But when I sing redemption’s story, they will fold their wings, For angels never felt the joys that our salvation brings.

Verse 2 But I hear another anthem, blending voices clear and strong, “Unto Him who hath redeemed us and hath bought us,” is the song; We have come thro’ tribulations to this land so fair and bright, In the fountain freely flowing He hath made our garments white.

Verse 3 Then the angels stand and listen, for they cannot join that song, Like the sound of many waters, by that happy, blood-washed throng For they sing about great trials, battles fought and vict’ries won, And they praised the great Redeemer, who hath said to them, “Well done.”

Verse 4 So, although I’m not an angel, yet I know that over there I will join a blessed chorus that the angels cannot share; I will sing about my Savior, who upon dark Calvary freely pardoned my transgressions, died to set the sinner free.

Love Your Enemies | Family Worship Guide

Matthew 5:43-48



MAIN IDEA: God's children distinguish themselves when choosing to love unlovely people.

PREPARATION:

Before you begin, take a moment to consider who it is that you're about have a conversation with. The creator God who spoke the world into existence, who commands the sun to rise in the East and set in the West, and with a word brings the dead to life, has invited you to draw near and experience the joy of being in His presence. Wow! What a privilege!

- Pray: "Oh Lord, open the eyes of our hearts that we might see wondrous things in your law."
- Read: Matthew 5:43-48

EXPLANATION:

Perfectionism is often associated with problems such as anxiety, depression, excessive anger, and obsessive-compulsive behaviors. It leads people to unremittingly strain toward impossible goals, ultimately distorting their perception of themselves and damaging their relationships with others. Imagine a wife and mother with several small children who's unable to relax and enjoy her family unless the house is in pristine condition. Everyone is stressed out and their relationships strained because she's unable to get the house looking "just right." Yet, Jesus commands His disciples to be perfect as their heavenly Father is perfect. So, how are we – people who receive Jesus' words as an authoritative revelation from God – to reconcile His command with what we know about perfectionism and human fallibility?

If we are to understand what Jesus meant when he said "you must be perfect" we must understand the context. Matthew 5:43-48 is the climax of what is often referred to as the six antitheses ("You have heard that it was said...but I tell you..."). We should not think of Jesus as breaking away from the Mosaic Law. Rather, he correctly interprets the law's intent and extends its application beyond mere legalistic observance to wholehearted fulfillment out of love for God and neighbor (see vv. 17-20). The antitheses began with Jesus warning us to guard our relationships with our brothers and sisters (see vv. 21-26) and now culminates in the command for us to love and pray for our enemies. And though his command may be difficult to follow, his reasoning is straightforward: "That we may be sons (and daughters) of our Father in heaven." To be a child of God is to be an imitator of the God who indiscriminately pours out his blessings upon the "good and the evil," and the "just and the unjust" alike. Jesus is telling us that we reflect the heart of God when we extend this same grace to those who malign and mistreat us. Loving those we have a natural affinity for says nothing to the world because everyone else does that anyway. We distinguish ourselves as God's children when we, by the power of His Spirit, choose to love unlovely people.

So, Jesus' demand for perfection is clearly related to love for others, friend and foe alike. But the question remains as to how imperfect people are to perfectly love other imperfect people. Jesus' command: "You must be perfect," is a command to identify with and live out of the heavenly capacity that we will one day fully experience. We are constantly aware that we need more improvement. We strive to grow as we obey instruction such as this. We trust the Holy Spirit to empower and correct us, and we rest in the assurance that Jesus' sacrifice on the cross makes us perfect.

CONVERSATION:

1. People often strive for perfection in ways that are of no eternal significance (physical appearances, grades, batting averages, etc.). In what ways are you mistakenly seeking perfection? How might embracing your identity as a child of the perfectly loving God reorient those pursuits?
2. Does it frustrate you to witness mean and nasty people prosper? Why is that?
3. Is there anyone in your life right now that is overly critical and who makes themselves extremely difficult to be around? What are some specific ways that you can personally pray for and tangibly show that person the indiscriminate love of God?

APPLICATION:

1. Ask God to bring someone to mind who is neither a believer in Christ nor pleasant to be around and seek out a tangible way to show them the unmerited favor of God.
2. Make a conscious effort to go about your day living as if God is presently establishing his perfect kingdom here on earth, and you get to be part of it! For example, if someone mistreats you, don't worry about getting even, because God is already in the act of righting all wrongs.

SUPPLICATION:

Lord Jesus, we thank you for your instruction, for your example, and most of all for dying on the cross so that our sins could be forgiven, and your Spirit could abide in our hearts. We confess that we've fallen short of God's command to "love our neighbors as ourselves." And we ask that, by your Spirit, you would enable us to work out our salvation in this way, so that we might be distinguished as citizens of your kingdom for the glory of our Father in heaven. Amen.

EXULTATION:

Recite the Apostle's Creed together as a family.

I believe in God the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth;
And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic* church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body
and the life everlasting. Amen.

*catholic with a lower-case c is not the denomination. It means universal or global church that every true local church is part of.