

STUDY GUIDE

WHAT ABOUT: *Our Enemies* (Week 3)

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Matthew 5.

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. 43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor 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.

Justice and Love.

When Jesus says "turn the other cheek" What is he saying? Is He going against the Old Testament law "an eye for an eye?" Well, Jesus says earlier in Matthew 5 that He came to enforce, not abolish, the law so this somehow must be in concert with the Old Testament. If we look through the OT, we will see passages like this one:

Micah 6:8 *He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?*

Do justice and at the same time, love kindness. Here we see an outer activism AND inner peace.

Questions for Reflection

1. Is Jesus preaching "pacifism?"
2. Why or why not?

Turning the Cheek.

When Jesus is struck at his trial He says in John 18, if I have done wrong, produce evidence of it! It was illegal for them to strike him unless they produced evidence against Him. Paul reacted similarly; when he is being beaten he says, "I appeal to Caesar!" So, apparently "turning the other cheek" doesn't just mean taking personal punishment and attack.

Turning the other cheek doesn't mean taking abuse; it means speaking up for justice but at the same time loving kindness. That means when we are "hurt" we offer forgiveness and a fresh start. There must be a spirit in you that has a concern for justice but no concern for saving face: justice with NO spite. This is difficult because it is completely opposite of the human heart:

Questions for Reflection

3. When you are insulted or emotionally hurt, how do you respond? Are you most likely to be:

Passive: just take it and don't confront;

Vindictive: you "strike" them back; or

A combination of both?

The Enemy is Me.

When you forgive, it doesn't mean you just trust the person who hurt you, but it means that you have to be willing to wipe the slate clean and start afresh. If we don't, we will find ourselves under the control of the hurt that was inflicted on us.

Bitterness follows unwanted experience, failures, disappointment, or setbacks that are, or are perceived to be, beyond one's control. - Atlantic Monthly

Until you forgive injustice has won. Like Jesus, we must overcome evil with good by doing justice and loving kindness. It helps us to do this when we remember that WE, yes WE, too are considered the “enemy” by some. In fact, we, yes WE, have even been enemies of God!

Matthew 5:44 *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.*

Romans 5:10 *For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.*

If you don't think you've ever been an enemy of God then you don't understand what it means to be a Christian. A Christian realizes that we've been bitter toward God and, if we are honest, that we have used God to get our way. He has to do it our way or we resent Him. In essence, we take our ball and go home and we repress our anger toward God.

Questions for Reflection

4. Can you see how you've been God's enemy?

True Forgiveness.

When we realize that by grace we are adopted then **we can do justice and love kindness!** When we know that we used God and He still forgave us, we can forgive.

Questions for Reflection

5. Take a few minutes, or several minutes, and visit the website of Louie Zamperini (<http://www.louiezamperini.com/>). You can

also view a short video about his life here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9O5yVz0cvQ>.

6. What thoughts do you have after hearing Louie's story of forgiveness?