

Lesson 9

Giving Up Your Rights

Icebreaker:

List some rights you have as a citizen of your country?

Introduction:

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus continues to impart godly family values to His disciples. His next subject deals with personal injury rights. He introduces it with the phrase an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. The phrase is found in Exodus 21:24, Leviticus 24:20 and Deuteronomy 19:21.

In western society we tend to think this phrase indicates that a person can seek revenge for personal injury. However, when the phrase is read in the context of the entire passage in which it is found, it clearly shows that God is not commanding retribution. He merely sets limits on the amount of retribution that may be exacted. For example, if a person loses an eye through injury from another he does not have the right to kill the person who injured him and take his property. Under the Law, retribution was limited to the loss suffered.

In theory the injured person could cause the same injury to the person who injured him but what good is it that two people have lost an eye? Generally, the Jewish court awarded compensation for five different aspects of the injury: damage, pain, healing, loss of time from work, and insult. The point of the Law was to be fair, even-handed and just.

Reading The Scripture:

Matthew 5:38-42 and Luke 6:29-30

The Sermon on the Mount Matthew 5:38-42 & Luke 6:29-30

(Gospels forged together into one seamless story, in collaboration with New American Standard Bible,
authored by Michael Gibson, Founder of Spirit & Truth, dba Key 2 Changes: "Follow Me: A Message from God", a Journey with Jesus)

You have heard that it was said, 'AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH.' But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either. And whoever shall force you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.

Group Discussion:

1. What thoughts go through your mind after hearing what Jesus taught?

The Commands:

1. Do not resist him who is evil.
2. Turn to him the other cheek also.
3. Let him have your coat also.
4. Go with him two miles.
5. Give to him who asks of you.

6. Do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.

The Lesson:

Jesus opens the topic of just compensation for personal injury with a statement concerning physical injury, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Then He challenges His disciples to take a different view. By using four cases of personal injury Jesus demonstrates that He wants them to be generous people, those who do not demand their rights.

The first case involves mental and emotional injuries received by a disciple. Jesus said, *“But I say to you, do not resist him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also.”* A slap and a clenched fist are two different things. A clenched fist indicates that a fight is occurring. A slap is done with an open hand. It conveys the idea of an insult. It is used to humiliate someone or provoke a fight.

Turning the cheek is an Aramaic idiom meaning “don’t start a fight or quarrel.” It takes two people to fight or have a quarrel. If the injured person does not retaliate then there is no fight or quarrel. Proverbs 17:14 says, *“The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so abandon the quarrel before it breaks out.”* Another proverb states, *“Keeping away from strife is an honor for a man, but any fool will quarrel”*.¹ Jesus wants His disciples to give up their right to be right. God will vindicate the righteous.

The second case involves harm caused by a disciple. Jesus said, *“And if anyone wants to sue you, and take your shirt, let him have your coat also.”* In this case the injured party is seeking a stated compensation for injury but has not gone to court yet to collect it. Jesus tells the disciples to meet the demand and give even more. The reason for it is to produce friendship with the injured person. Jesus conveyed this same thought earlier in the Sermon on the Mount.² Jesus wants His disciples to give up the right to personal legal protection when they have wronged someone. God will see that justice is done.

The third case involves lack of compensation for services rendered by a disciple. Jesus said, *“And whoever shall force you to go one mile, go with him two.”* Going the second mile is still a popular phrase and means doing more than what is required. Jesus wants His disciples to give up the right to compensation for use of their time and talents. God will reward.

Loaning something the disciple has, to someone who asks for it is the fourth case. On the surface this appears rather easy, but Matthew’s gospel doesn’t convey the whole thought. Luke 6:30 declares the truth of the matter. *“Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back.”* It involves the loss of the disciple’s property.

The original thought behind this teaching comes from the book of Deuteronomy.³ *“For the LORD your God shall bless you as He has promised you, and you will lend to many nations, but you will not borrow; and you will rule over many nations, but they will not rule over you. If there is a poor man with you, one of your brothers, in any of your towns in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart, nor close your hand from your poor brother; but you shall freely open your hand to him, and shall generously lend him sufficient for his need in whatever he lacks. Beware, lest there is a base thought in your heart, saying, ‘The seventh*

¹ Proverbs 20:3

² Matthew 5:25-26

³ Deuteronomy 15:6-11

year, the year of remission, is near,' and your eye is hostile toward your poor brother, and you give him nothing; then he may cry to the LORD against you, and it will be a sin in you. You shall generously give to him, and your heart shall not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all your undertakings. For the poor will never cease to be in the land; therefore I command you, saying, 'You shall freely open your hand to your brother, to your needy and poor in your land.'” Jesus wants His disciples to give up the right of return of their property. God is the owner of all things.

In each case, Jesus asked His disciples to do more than was required. In other words, they were to give gifts or bless others. Jesus wants his disciples to be like their Father in heaven, generous, people of an open hand. They should not grasp the things of this world or hold onto their rights, for their Father in heaven shall reward them.

Group Discussion:

2. If the disciples of Jesus do more than what is required of them what will the people think?
3. How do you think this Christ-like behavior affects other?
4. How are friendships formed?

Point Of The Lesson:

Do more than is required.

Application:

At the next group meeting report any occasion you had to be generous by giving up your rights.