

Apr 23/23 Small Group Questions

"Overcome Evil with Good" Matthew 5:38-42

1. What is our most natural reaction to those who have wronged us? What impact does that reaction have on the other person? on us?
2. Consider and discuss the following quotes.

"Have you never tasted the luxury of indulging in hard thoughts against those who have, as you think, injured you? Have you never known what a positive fascination it is to brood over their unkindnesses, and to pry into their malice, and to imagine all sorts of wrong and uncomfortable things about them? It has made you wretched, of course, but it has been a fascinating sort of wretchedness that you could not easily give up." - Hannah Whitehall Smith

The problem with revenge is that it never gets what it wants. It never evens the score. Fairness never comes. The chain reaction set off by every act of vengeance always takes this unhindered course, it ties both the injured and injurer to an escalator of pain. – Lewis Smedes

Read Matthew 5:38-42

3. (vs. 38 and Leviticus 24:18-20) This law is called Lex Talionis – a law of equal retaliation. How would the law curb revenge and retaliation in a society?
4. The Pharisees interpreted this law as meaning that you could insist upon your right to avenge yourself. Jesus' principle is that we would not resist the one who is evil. What doesn't this mean from other places in scripture? (eg. John 18:19-24; Acts 16:35-39; Romans 13:1-6)
5. In each of these examples Jesus is inviting an active response that turns the tables on wrong. In what ways would these encounters change the whole dynamic of interaction? To what effect?
6. Read Romans 12: 19-21. The ancient Egyptians had a practice of heaping coals on their head to show their remorse and repentance. In what ways can returning a person's evil for good lead them to repentance?
7. Refer once again to Romans 12:19-21. (vs. 19) In what way can having a trust in God's justice, God's commitment to right wrongs, help us turn away from revenge and return evil for good?
8. In what ways can the gospel – seeing that God returns our evil for good – the good of dying in our place in Jesus taking the punishment for our sin – shape our hearts to return another's evil for good?