

8. Simple Commands against dog-eat-dog mentality

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Do unto others before they do unto you
Don't get mad, get even
Whoever dies with the most toys wins.
Shoot'em first, let God sort'em.

Ours is a selfish and volatile generation. There are selfishness and meanness that weren't there before. We find them from road rage to shooting rampages in schools and the workplace. That "laid back" posture of the long-ago fifties has changed to a "fight back" one today. We have developed a dog-eat-dog mentality, and instead of domesticating the dog, we've unleashed this pit bull from our hearts to the society.

One evening after WWII, Sir Winston Churchill had a few drinks with his friends. He and his buddies got on the elevator of a hotel in London to get down to the lobby. A few floors down, a noble lady walked into the loud elevator and recognized the prime minister. She was disgusted with his drunkenness and blurted out, "Sir, you are drunk." Churchill with a grin on his lips, he shouted back, "Madam, you are ugly." Her jaw dropped. Before she could respond, he continued, "But tomorrow morning, I will be sober....."

We often want to get back at those who hurts us physically or emotionally. Let's what our Lord Jesus teaches us today.

A. CHRIST'S COUNTERCULTURAL COUNSEL

Matthew 5:38 "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'

If we are ever to make an impact on our culture, we must not let ourselves become conformed to it. To avoid being squeezed into its mold, we must live counter to our culture.

Romans 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

This important OT law from Ex 21:24-25, Lev 24:20 and Deut 19:21 is known as "Lex Talionis" which means the law of retaliation. It covers what type of punishment should be sentenced out to transgressors by the judges, not by individuals. In other words, God was not condoning vigilante attitude. It was punishment by law and God was telling the judges how to deal with those who committed crimes.

Matthew 5:39 But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.

To establish the foundational principles of His kingdom, Jesus dug deeper than the Pharisees' improvised code. He constructed His code of conduct:

1) Release our rights

Our rights to dignity, comfort, privacy, and possessions become threatened, we hire the best legal fists money can buy and litigate our way to winning them backs. But

Jesus' advice is that we take off our gloves and refuse the fight in the first place. To be able to do that, it takes the courage and complete dependency to God's sovereignty to release our rights.

2) Release our right to personal dignity

Note in verse 39 how carefully Christ chooses His words. He says, "slaps you on your right cheek," not "punches you in the mouth." A "slap in the face" is not to be understood literally but figuratively. It's a colloquialism for a backhand insult. And when we get insulted, the natural tendency is to strike with a backhanded insult in return.

But does that mean we are never to defend ourselves? Absolutely not. This is regarding insult not self-defense.

Proverbs 24:29 Do not say, "I will do to him just as he has done to me; I will render to the man according to his work."

Romans 12:17-19 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

Matthew 5:40-42 If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.

This outer cloak doubled as a warm blanket. Under Mosaic law, it was a protected possession. For the benefit of Christ's kingdom and for the good of others, we should be willing to give up all our possessions.

These scriptures cause a lot of confusion because they are easy to misinterpret so as to make them ridiculous and impractical. Jesus never said anything ridiculous or impractical. If my interpretation is ridiculous and impractical, I have the wrong interpretation. But what He is seeking to point out here is my attitude towards my possessions. So many people are very possessive and nothing is good enough, they are bound by their possessions. Jesus wants us to hold everything with loose grips.

In v 41, we see the word 'compel.' The Greek word for this is 'aggareuo.' It means 'to employ a courier, dispatch a mounted messenger, press into public service. The Roman government gave the authority to their soldiers to order any of their colonial population to carry their shields or bags up to one mile. The people must obey the orders, otherwise they can be killed. The Israelites despised this Roman order over them. We find a good example in Matt 27:32: A Roman soldier made Simon of Cyrene to carry Jesus' cross to Golgotha.

Jesus is teaching to go extra mile to win the heart of those who oppose our belief. By the way, this is where we get the word "Going extra miles."

B. LOVE INSTEAD OF HATE

Matthew 5:43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'

The first half of verse 43 about loving your neighbor is taken From Leviticus 19:18. But the portion about hating your enemy is not found in the Scripture. It was a gross distortion of the Law, twisted by the manipulative, self-serving hands of the rabbis and Pharisees.

Proverbs 25:21 If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat; And if he is thirsty, give him water to drink;

Obviously, the religious leaders of Jesus' day let their emotions get the better of them when it came to their enemies, choosing to hate them rather than show love.

Matthew 5:44-45 But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

God never tells us to do something He doesn't do and we cannot do. He tells to love, bless, be good and pray for those who are against us.

- Does it mean we have to love, bless, be nice and pray for ACLU lawyers who try everything to destroy Christianity in the United States? Yes.
- Does it mean we have to love, bless, be nice and pray for a coworker who dumps his foul language whenever you are near him? Yes.
- Does it mean we have to love, bless, be nice and pray for those people who come to our door on Saturday morning to share their cult belief? Yes.
- Does it mean we have to love, bless, be nice and pray for those jerks who cut us off and slow down right in front of us? Yes.

The list can go on.

Jesus tells us that the Father in heaven pours out His blessings to believers and non-believers alike. God's love knows no boundary. And if we are to become like Him, we need to love like that too.

Matthew 5:46-47 For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so?
Jesus is nailing us for our favoritism or cliques in the church.

Clique is not allowed in CCOS. If you feel that we have a clique among those who work as volunteers before and after the service, I can assure you this, we don't have it. We go out lunch together after breaking down the equipment. Anyone chooses to join us is more than welcome. I am an anti-church clique. I will do everything within my power to break any type of cliques.

Especially ladies, don't even think about making a clique in this church. You are not better than someone else, because you have better hairstyle or better dress than someone else. Our God doesn't see them, but God sees our hearts. In God's dictionary, there is no racial prejudice and no financial preferential treatment.

Before you complain that I don't hang around with you, you come hang around with me and introduce yourself to me. If you do that, I will get to know you and we'll be tight.

Now I am going to talk to those who are rather invisible in the church. All of people who come to church want other people to remember them and acknowledge them. But they don't want to make themselves known to others. How are we going to know you, unless you make yourselves known to us? Those people come in late in the service without talking to anyone and as soon as the service is over, they make a

bee line to the door. As you all know that we are going to have our church picnic this afternoon. This is a great opportunity to get to know each other, especially those whom we didn't have a chance to meet.

C. BE "PERFECT" AS OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN

Matthew 5:48 Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Let's face it. You know it and I know it. We ain't perfect. But God tells us to be perfect as the Father in heaven is perfect. How? While we do what He tells us to do, we will walk closer with Him and get to know His heart. That is when we start to be less like ourselves, but more like Him and becoming perfect like Him. Of course, we will never be gods, but being identified with Him as His children.

Heb 7:19 for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.

D. APPLICATIONS

Many of us know about W.W.J.D. It stands for "What Would Jesus Do?" We already know what Jesus would do. He would do everything perfect. What about us? The Sermon on the Mount is not about "What would Jesus do?" but "What Would Jesus Have Us Do?" Jesus shows us how to do. Now it is up to us to do what we've learned.

1) Let's be unselfish.

Start living for the good of the rest of our families instead of just for our own well-being.

2) Let's turn the other cheek to the insulting remark.

Instead of keeping a running retaliation tab on them, let's look beyond their wrongs.

3) Let's be a blessing in their lives instead of a curse.

Let's fulfill our roles by extending love of God to them.

When we do these, we will probably encounter all kinds of misunderstanding and mistreatment.

Will loving our enemies be easy? History teaches us, "No." Will it be worth the effort? You bet it will. It may be a struggle, but that struggle will transform us. And when the angels look down from above, they will smile wistfully and say to one another, "She's the spitting image of her Father, isn't she?"

What a compliment! And what a way to make the Father in heaven proud!