

The Sermon on the Mount: Retaliation and Anger

**Avoiding a vicious cycle with the transforming initiatives offered by Jesus
Matthew 5:38-42**

30 August 2015
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Matthew 5:38-42

- “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ 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. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.
- (Matthew 5:38-42 ESV)

Matthew 5:43-48

- “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is 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. ...

Matthew 5:43-48 continued

- “For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.
- (Matthew 5:43-48 ESV)

Choosing a *vicious cycle* or a *transforming initiative*

Traditional Righteousness	Vicious Cycle	Transforming Initiative
Eye for eye, tooth for tooth	Retaliate violently or revengefully, by evil means	Turn the other cheek, Give your tunic and cloak, Go the second mile, Give to beggar and borrower

The transforming initiative: “Don’t hit back at all”

- Matt. 5:38-42 from the Message:
- “Here’s another old saying that deserves a second look: ‘Eye for eye, tooth for tooth.’ Is that going to get us anywhere? Here’s what I propose: ‘Don’t hit back at all.’ If someone strikes you, stand there and take it. If someone drags you into court and sues for the shirt off your back, giftwrap your best coat and make a present of it. And if someone takes unfair advantage of you, use the occasion to practice the servant life. No more tit-for-tat stuff. Live generously.

Even though anger can be destructive, **it also has a basic goodness:**

- “Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has hasty temper exalts folly” Prov 14:29
- “A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention.” - Prov 15:18
- “Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.” - Prov 16:32

Three types of anger responses we can have:

1. Blowing-up anger (often described in Scripture as “being given to anger”)
2. Slow-anger
3. No anger

Our response:

- 1. **We can hold our “rights” and our possessions loosely.** What do we have that we did not receive from the Lord? I
- 2. When we are angry, or we encounter anger, **we can remember that anger is love moved to action.** Then, for ourselves, we can be slow-to-anger by **remembering that God is sovereign and that he will repay.**
- 3. And finally, **we can ask God to increase our faith,** so that in the face of tough challenges or “slaps on the cheek”, we could rest in Him and practice God-given self-control instead of destructive blow-up anger.