

The Extra Kilometre

Christians need to develop a reputation as the hardest working employees around. If the boss expects a certain level, Christians are obliged to give just a bit more. This certainly doesn't mean that should let people take advantage of us to the point of abuse. But the teaching of Christ is clear.

8. When Christ talks about going the extra distance, he is talking about the common practice of a Roman soldier conscripting a civilian to do some manual task, like carry something for a mile. How did Jews feel about the Romans?
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The point is, that the Jews regarded the Romans as their enemies.

9. In summary how should we treat those who are unkind to us, and why (Mat. 5:44-48)
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We were once enemies of God (Rom. 5:10), but now He has brought us into His family, and made peace with us. This is the kind of God we follow: a God who loves His enemies.

Amen.

LIVING DIFFERENTLY

Part Two

This second series of studies on the remainder of the Beatitudes is designed to show us how Christ expects us to live. We have already seen that if the world lived by the standards of Christ, our societies would be radically different. While our societies may not corporately change, we as individuals can. This is what Christ expects. He not only prescribes how we should change, but He also gives us the supernatural power to do so.

BEHIND ENEMY LINES

Read Matthew 5:38-48



Why someone wouldn't like you is beyond me. But, unfortunately there are times throughout our lives that we run across someone who just wants to be hard to get along with. How should we treat people like this?

Our natural response is to seek revenge. "Give it as good as you get it", is the motto of some politicians. And you would think that it is also the motto of many voters as well. Jesus wasn't altruistic about this world. He knew it wasn't perfect. Part of that imperfection is the fact that sometimes people just don't get along. But even in situations like this, He had some practical prescriptions.

We Change, People Don't

If we take on board the teaching of Christ thus far, we can not but live differently. Yet even though our lives may change significantly, it does not mean that the lives of those around us will change. In fact those that may have once enjoyed our company before we were followers of Christ, may now shun us.

1. In ancient uncivilised cultures, retribution for a wrong rarely matched the wrong. An example of this might be the killing of someone who lightly injured someone else. How did the Old Testament law put an end to this kind of retribution? (Ex. 21:24)
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Jesus cited this in Matthew 5:38. He was endorsing the civilised policy of justice. But He took the issue of personal injury one step further by reminding His hearers of other parts of the Old Testament that required enemies to be treated "unfairly".

2. How does Proverbs 25:21-22 prescribe how enemies should be unfairly treated, and why is it unfair?
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I was once in a church where the senior minister left the church in tragic moral circumstances. He started another church in the same area. He used our literature (tracts, follow-up material, etc.), which he had stolen from our church, and put stickers with his new church's details over our address and meeting times. When I saw these being handed out in the shopping centre, where we used to witness, I was furious! I went to the new senior minister to lodge my complaint. His reply flawed me. He told me to go and ask the former pastor whether he would like any more of our literature, and whether there was anything else we could do for him!

3. What will God do for us when we treat enemies with undue kindness? (Prov. 25:22)
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4. What is the promise contained in Proverbs 16:7?
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Jesus didn't say not to hit back in Matthew 5:39. He actually said something that conveyed compassion for an enemy. Not only shouldn't we seek revenge, but we should actively seek to bless them.

5. What did Jesus say to do for our enemies in Matthew 5:44?
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When Slandered...

The early Christians underwent a great deal of persecution. Much of it would have been in the form of slander and ridicule.

6. We catch a glimpse of this in 1Cor. 4:13. Paul possibly alludes to some of the slanderous remarks. Note what these may have been, and then how Paul and the early Christians responded-
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Peter also notes that the early Christians were subject to much slander. He says that Christians should be living such a godly lifestyle that accusations like that would not have any credibility (1Pt. 3:16).

7. What does this mean for Christians who are seeking to sue someone for defamation? (note also Mat. 5:40)
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