

Life Group Discussion Guide
“Rights, Revenge, and Retaliation”
Sunday, June 4, 2017

Open in prayer.

- How are individual rights regarded in American culture? Other cultures?
- What is an example of when we might need to stand up for our rights?
- How have you defended your rights in the past -- either against another individual or a larger entity?

The Big Idea: Having “rights” is a fundamental American value. We are willing to defend our rights at just about any cost. But what if Jesus calls us to “lay down” our rights in order to take up a higher calling? Would you be willing?

Read Matthew 5:38-42

These verses describe how we are to respond when our rights are violated.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth. But I tell you, do not resist an evil person.’”

When Jesus uses this “**eye for an eye**” phrase he is quoting three OT verses (Exodus 21:22-25).

- Why did God give this command?
- Was this command from God given as a **mandate** to seek revenge? Why or why not? How might this command be positive? How might it be negative?
- Is Jesus saying we cannot, or should not confront evil? Why or why not?
- How does confronting evil differ from seeking revenge?

Laying down our rights for the cause of Christ: (Jesus identifies four of our perceived rights)

1. The right to personal respect.

Vs. 39 - “If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.”

It is wrong to think that Jesus means a physical attack cannot be resisted or defended against. When Jesus speaks of a slap on your right cheek, it was culturally understood as a deep insult, not a physical attack.

- What should be our response to personal attacks that are not physical?
- How does our response to a personal attack affect our reputation? How does it affect God’s?



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Read and discuss Matthew 5: 11 and Proverbs 12:16, Romans 12:21, Philippians 2:3-4

2. The right to personal property.

Vs. 40 - “And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well.”

Jesus is saying that we should not insist on our “rights” but should be willing to be inconvenienced in order to show grace, mercy, and honor to other people.

- How does our response to insult and attack reflect our trust in God?
- What gives us confidence in God that he will take care of injustices and wrongs in the world?

Romans 12:18-19 - “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord. “

3. The right to personal freedom.

Vs. 41 - “ If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles.”

At Jesus’ time, Israel was occupied by Rome. One of the conditions of this occupation was that a Roman soldier could command a citizen to carry his pack for up to a mile, and there was nothing the citizen could do about it. The Jews measured the mile in steps...and they counted every single step. When they reached one mile, they dropped the pack and left the Roman to carry his own load or find another victim.

- Can you recall a time when you helped or worked for someone who showed no gratitude? How did you feel? What caused you to persevere?

Read Philippians 2:14-16

- How does complaining impact our own attitudes? How does it affect those around us?
- Why should we serve joyfully?



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4. The right to personal possessions.

Vs 42 - “Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.”

Pastor Loren said: Our default position should be to say yes to a person in need, rather than immediately looking for excuses not to help or concluding that it’s not our responsibility. How do you respond to this?

We can lay down our rights because:

- **Jesus, our example laid down his rights for us.**
- Read Philippians 2:5-11. How does Jesus illustrate what it looks like to surrender our rights to God? What is God’s response when we surrender our rights to him?
- **God blesses and exalts the humble.**

What does this look like?

- We are kind in the face of unkindness.
- We resist the temptation to seek revenge.
- We serve others with joy rather than grudgingly.
- We choose to be generous rather than selfish.