

DAY 1 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER (“SOAP”)

CONVERSATION STARTER

When are you most tempted to retaliate? Do you?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

Scripture:

“You have heard the law that says the punishment must match the injury: ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say, do not resist an evil person! If someone slaps you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also. If you are sued in court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too. If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles. Give to those who ask, and don’t turn away from those who want to borrow.” **Matthew 5:38-42 NLT**

Bless those who persecute you. Don’t curse them; pray that God will bless them. Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with each other. Don’t be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don’t think you know it all! Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone. Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, “I will take revenge; I will pay them back,” says the Lord. Instead, “If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads.” Don’t let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good. **Romans 12:14-21 NLT**

And live peacefully with each other. Brothers and sisters, we urge you to warn those who are lazy. Encourage those who are timid. Take tender care of those who are weak. Be patient with everyone. See that no one pays back evil for evil, but always try to do good to each other and to all people. **1 Thessalonians 5:13-15 NLT**

Then the high priest stood up before the others and asked Jesus, “Well, aren’t you going to answer these charges? What do you have to say for yourself?” But Jesus was silent and made no reply... **Mark 14:60-61 NLT**

Sermon Insights: Jesus is asking us to give up our right to retaliation.

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Out of a position of strength, we are called to respond to negative with positive. How?

Consider how you might respond kindly to a small slight, perhaps in an uncomfortable conversation.

Consider how you might respond with Jesus’ forgiveness when you are faced with significant unkindness.

How does Jesus’ forgiveness of you (instead of retaliation) pave the way for your forgiveness of others?

If resisting evil incites escalation, how can not resisting evil actually hijack its effects?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, when my heart is full of fear and anxiety, I often respond to the slightest slight with anger, control, RE-vengeance, and putting a wall around my heart. Help me feel significant and be secure in my relationship with you so I can respond in kindness when I am offended.

DAY 2 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER (“SOAP”)

CONVERSATION STARTER

Have you ever “lost everything”? Has your perspective changed since the event?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

Scripture:

“You have heard the law that says the punishment must match the injury: ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say, do not resist an evil person! If someone slaps you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also. If you are sued in court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too. If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles. Give to those who ask, and don’t turn away from those who want to borrow.” **Matthew 5:38-42 NLT**

Think back on those early days when you first learned about Christ. Remember how you remained faithful even though it meant terrible suffering. Sometimes you were exposed to public ridicule and were beaten, and sometimes you helped others who were suffering the same things. You suffered along with those who were thrown into jail, and when all you owned was taken from you, you accepted it with joy. You knew there were better things waiting for you that will last forever.

So do not throw away this confident trust in the Lord. Remember the great reward it brings you! Patient endurance is what you need now, so that you will continue to do God’s will. Then you will receive all that he has promised. “For in just a little while, the Coming One will come and not delay. And my righteous ones will live by faith. But I will take no pleasure in anyone who turns away.” But we are not like those who turn away from God to their own destruction. We are the faithful ones, whose souls will be saved.

Hebrews 10:32-39 NLT

Sermon Insights:

Jesus is taking on the presumed right to security and possessions.

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

How do Christians who lose everything due to their faith find the power to be joy-filled?

Imagine the reactions when the Christian being sued gives up TWICE what is required...what would the judge say? The public? The plaintiff?

Do you face difficulties for following Jesus?

Would you willingly give up twice what was demanded of you in order to display your trust in Jesus and engage the promise of receiving something better in Heaven from God himself?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, teach me not to resist evil people but to respond with your love, grace, and kindness.

DAY 3 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER (“SOAP”)

CONVERSATION STARTER

What is “freedom”? Do you feel free according to your definition?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

Scripture: “You have heard the law that says the punishment must match the injury: ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say, do not resist an evil person! If someone slaps you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also. If you are sued in court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too. If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles. Give to those who ask, and don’t turn away from those who want to borrow.” **Matthew 5:38-42 NLT**

Another look at self-determination and privacy: Accept other believers who are weak in faith, and don’t argue with them about what they think is right or wrong. For instance, one person believes it’s all right to eat anything. But another believer with a sensitive conscience will eat only vegetables. Those who feel free to eat anything must not look down on those who don’t. And those who don’t eat certain foods must not condemn those who do, for God has accepted them.

Who are you to condemn someone else’s servants? Their own master will judge whether they stand or fall. And with the Lord’s help, they will stand and receive his approval. In the same way, some think one day is more holy than another day, while others think every day is alike.

You should each be fully convinced that whichever day you choose is acceptable. Those who worship the Lord on a special day do it to honor him. Those who eat any kind of food do so to honor the Lord, since they give thanks to God before eating. And those who refuse to eat certain foods also want to please the Lord and give thanks to God.

For we don’t live for ourselves or die for ourselves. If we live, it’s to honor the Lord. And if we die, it’s to honor the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. Christ died and rose again for this very purpose—to be Lord both of the living and of the dead.

So why do you condemn another believer? Why do you look down on another believer? Remember, we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For the Scriptures say, “‘As surely as I live,’ says the Lord, ‘every knee will bend to me, and every tongue will declare allegiance to God.’” Yes, each of us will give a personal account to God. So let’s stop condemning each other. Decide instead to live in such a way that you will not cause another believer to stumble and fall. **Romans 14:1-13 NLT**

Sermon Insights: Jesus addresses the right to self-determination and privacy.

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Jesus taught his followers to do twice what was demanded of them. Imagine a Christian accompanying a soldier voluntarily for twice the amount of time. What good might come from honoring Jesus’ teaching to serve selflessly? Where can you serve more than is required for the sake of making Jesus known?

Do you find it significant that the first Scripture is about Jesus teaching believers to serve the oppressive Romans, and the next Scripture is to the ROMAN church full of people who need to learn to serve each other?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, teach me to serve others out of the abundance of kindness you have given me!

DAY 4 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER (“SOAP”)

CONVERSATION STARTER

Do you enjoy planting seeds of any kind?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

Scripture:

“You have heard the law that says the punishment must match the injury: ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say, do not resist an evil person! If someone slaps you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also. If you are sued in court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too. If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles. Give to those who ask, and don’t turn away from those who want to borrow.” **Matthew 5:38-42 NLT**

Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don’t give reluctantly or in response to pressure. “For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.” And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others.

As the Scriptures say, “They share freely and give generously to the poor. Their good deeds will be remembered forever.” For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you. Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous. And when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will thank God.

So two good things will result from this ministry of giving—the needs of the believers in Jerusalem will be met, and they will joyfully express their thanks to God. As a result of your ministry, they will give glory to God. For your generosity to them and to all believers will prove that you are obedient to the Good News of Christ. And they will pray for you with deep affection because of the overflowing grace God has given to you. Thank God for this gift too wonderful for words! **2 Corinthians 9:6-15 NLT**

Sermon Insights:

Jesus addresses our right to what’s mine.

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

How is giving like planting seeds?

What is the attitude God wants generous Christians to have? What are the wrong attitudes for giving?

There is a limit to what I can provide. There is no limit to what God can provide. Does that encourage you to be generous with what God provides?

Once the money changes hands, what is the lasting effect? If building relationships with God is the real point of the act of generosity, how are you going to be intentionally and sacrificially generous today?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, thank you for allowing my heart to rest in the fact that you are my provider...help me to be generous and giving like you!

DAY 5 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER (“SOAP”)

CONVERSATION STARTER

Who is the person that makes you feel the most safe? Why?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

Scripture: *NOTE: Slavery and servitude were a pervasive part of the ancient world. While Christianity eventually effected the abolition of slavery, some early Christians were slaves and received special instructions just like other groups of people in the church. Giving these instructions was a mark of honor and respect for those found in this situation, not an implicit endorsement of the practice of slavery itself. Jesus offered himself as the example of someone who served others despite difficult circumstances.*

You who are slaves must submit to your masters with all respect. Do what they tell you—not only if they are kind and reasonable, but even if they are cruel. For God is pleased when, conscious of his will, you patiently endure unjust treatment. Of course, you get no credit for being patient if you are beaten for doing wrong. But if you suffer for doing good and endure it patiently, God is pleased with you. For God called you to do good, even if it means suffering, just as Christ suffered for you.

He is your example, and you must follow in his steps. He never sinned, nor ever deceived anyone. He did not retaliate when he was insulted, nor threaten revenge when he suffered. He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly. He personally carried our sins in his body on the cross so that we can be dead to sin and live for what is right. By his wounds you are healed. Once you were like sheep who wandered away. But now you have turned to your Shepherd, the Guardian of your souls. **1 Peter 2:18-25**

By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence. And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. **These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world’s corruption caused by human desires.**

In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God’s promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone. The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. **2 Peter 1:3-8 NLT**

Sermon Insights: What Jesus is talking about here is our relationships. Jesus invites you to surrender by receiving the grace and love of God, and then you are invited to extend his grace and love to others—whether a person deserves it or not!

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Have you, or are you currently suffering for doing good? How does Jesus’ suffering encourage you?

How is God using his divine power to help you share his divine nature?

Of all the characteristics in 2 Peter 1, what are 2-3 that you can intentionally grow in this week?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, thank you for being the “guardian of my soul.” Help me to endure difficulty with patience and to surrender to your divine power so that I can grow in your divine nature!