



## **Week 8: Matthew 5:38-48 An Eye for an Eye**

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### **Introduction**

In Matthew 5:38–48, Jesus overturns the idea of repaying wrong for wrong. He calls His followers to respond to evil with grace, turning the other cheek and going the extra mile. Instead of only loving friends, He commands love for enemies and prayer for persecutors. By doing so, believers reflect the mercy and character of God. Jesus invites His people to embody perfect love that mirrors the Father’s heart.

### **Ice Breaker**

When is a time you found it hard to show kindness or forgiveness, and what helped (or didn’t help) you respond with grace?

### **Turn to Scripture**

38 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’<sup>39</sup> But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. 40 And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. 41 If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. 42 Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 44 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. 46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? 47 And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?<sup>48</sup> Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

## Discussion

1. Jesus challenges the familiar principle of “an eye for an eye.” How does this teaching confront the natural human desire for justice or revenge, and how does it make you reflect on your own responses to wrongs?
2. What emotions or beliefs make this command especially difficult, and how might practicing it shape our character over time?
  - Are there specific people or situations in your life where this is particularly challenging?
  - How might learning to love in these difficult contexts reveal more of God’s character through you?
3. In what ways can our daily interactions—at work, home, or in the community—either mirror or fall short of this standard, and what changes might be needed?
  - What habits or thought patterns make it easier or harder to show this kind of love consistently?
  - How could small, intentional acts of grace change the culture around you over time?
4. Cross-reference with Romans 12:17–21. How do Jesus’ and Paul’s teachings together deepen your understanding of Christian love, mercy, and justice, and what practical applications emerge when you consider both?

## Application

Application: This week, intentionally look for one situation where you normally might react defensively, critically, or with frustration; at work, home, or even online. Instead of responding in kind, pause and choose a response that reflects God’s love: offer patience, forgiveness, or encouragement. Afterward, reflect on how this choice affected both you and the other person, and how it challenges you to rely on God’s grace rather than your own instincts.

*Have questions about the sermon? Email us: [groups@sanctuschurch.com](mailto:groups@sanctuschurch.com)*