



Parkway Fellowship

No Regrets • Bringing a Smile to Unhappy Relationships •
Matthew 5:38-42; Galatians 6:7-9; Luke 6:32-35 • 10/13/2019

MAIN POINT

In relationships, happiness doesn't begin with I but with you.

INTRODUCTION

Use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What messages does our culture send about the power of self and the need to be self-sufficient? Where are these messages the strongest?

In what area of your life are you most drawn to self-sufficiency or selfishness—family, work, church, friendships? Why do you think that is?

Jesus taught a radically different way of relating to other people—living for others rather than yourself. In short, we are called to live submissively. Just as in biblical times, this approach runs counter to worldly values today. Jesus expects us to put others before ourselves consistently; it's not about words but about actions motivated by love. When we are wronged, it calls for a response of grace rather than punishment.

UNDERSTANDING

Use this section to read the Bible together and talk about it.

| Ask a volunteer to read Matthew 5:38-42.

In the Books of Moses, the command about revenge was said three times: Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20; Deuteronomy 19:21. Without such a legal principle, the loss of, say, one tooth, could lead to the revenge of knocking out two teeth, which could escalate further. Recompense was to be proportional to the damage inflicted. In its Old Testament form, this

law of retaliation kept legal judgments from being excessive.

What stands out to you about the four examples Jesus gave His followers in these verses? How do these apply to our lives today?

When you think about living out Christ's commands in this passage, how does it make you feel (i.e. joyful, guilty, burdened, resistant, ready, cautious, etc.)? Explain.

In the first century, this law of retaliation was an excuse for taking personal, private revenge. Some religious teachers—forgetting the principle of mercy—supposed equal retaliation was always required. Jesus, however, taught a better way for His followers. Those whose hearts He has cleansed have no need to retaliate. They don't need to get even. They can forego the right to vengeance, believing that ultimately the Lord will judge all evil. Thus when God's people refuse to retaliate, they show they trust God to judge all things fairly in the end. In verses 39-42, Jesus offered four examples of what it means not to oppose an evildoer. In each instance, the natural tendency to retaliate or insist on one's rights is overcome by a heart made pure by Christ.

In this week's sermon, we learned that we should make the extra effort in marriage. What do we communicate to God and others when we do that?

| Ask a volunteer to read Galatians 6:7-9.

What do you think Paul means when he says that "God will not be mocked"?

What are some things that might cause us to get "tired of doing good" in relationships?

When we sin, we mock God even if we do not realize it. When God says, "You shall not steal" but we steal, we are saying, "I am stealing! What are you going to do about it!" Though we may not see the immediate ramifications for our actions, God will not be mocked. We will eventually feel the consequences of our disobedience. God knows our sins even when other people don't, and to continue sinning mocks Him. Eventually we will reap what we sow.

In this week's message, we learned that in parenting we should "play the long game." How have you seen this true in your own life, either the recipient of a parent who didn't get tired of doing good for you or in your own experience of parenting?

We must remember that every time we serve others, we serve the Lord . We serve others, not because they always deserve it or appreciate it, but because God wants us to. It doesn't

matter if our efforts of goodwill and love are unappreciated at times, because we are serving our eternal Master. If we will keep this perspective, it can help us when we feel undervalued.

| Ask a volunteer to read Luke 14:12-14 and Luke 6:32-35.

In Luke 14:12-14, was Jesus saying you shouldn't ever have your friends and family over for a meal? What was He saying?

Does Luke 6:32-35 mean we shouldn't act lovingly toward those who love us? What, then, does it mean?

What do you learn about God in these verses? What do you learn about yourself? In practical terms, what does it mean for you to be gracious and merciful to others?

Jesus taught that people demonstrate true humility by acting on the basis of what others need rather than on what others can do for them in return. He explained that God Himself would repay such humility. By reaching out to those who could not repay the act of kindness, the host would not expect to receive anything in return. But by this action he would be inviting a much greater reward, God's special blessing. In dying on the cross for our sins, Jesus demonstrated such humility to us; love requires that we demonstrate the gospel by following His example.

In this week's message, we learned that we should do things for friends without expecting to be paid back. What greater reward than being "paid back" is there for such behavior?

APPLICATION

Discuss how to apply what you have studied.

This week we learned three ways to live with no regrets: In marriage, make the extra effort. In parenting, play the long game. With friends, do things without expecting to be paid back. Of these three, which do you need to cultivate most right now? How would your life be different as God helps you to put this quality into action?

Do we have the responsibility as a group to help each other love people like Jesus wants us to? How can we do that?

PRAYER

Thank God for His great mercy and love that He continuously extends toward you. Ask Him to help you extend that same mercy and love to other people, even when they don't deserve it.

COMMENTARY

| Matthew 5:38-42

As many do today, the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day must have taken the "eye for an eye" passages (Exod. 21:24; Lev. 24:19-20; Deut. 19:21) as justification for hurting others at least as badly as they had been hurt. The law was not given to exact revenge, but to legislate justice. Breaking the law has consequences, but personal vengeance has no place. These passages have often been wrongly taken as a minimum guideline for retaliation. What Jesus clarifies is that they were always intended as a maximum or a ceiling for retaliation, and that mercy was always an acceptable intention underlying these laws.

For the kingdom servant, legalistically "letting the punishment fit the crime" and insisting upon a "pound of flesh" falls short. We must actually consider blessing the repentant criminal. Mercy (withholding deserved punishment) and grace (giving undeserved gifts) are legitimate norms of conduct.

The one mile (5:41) refers to the practice of the Roman soldiers requiring civilians to carry their burden for one mile. By Roman law, the soldier could require no more than one mile of a single porter, but Jesus' kingdom servants (in representing the gracious spirit of their king) are to go beyond what is required of them.

| Galatians 6:7-9

6:7. Paul warned believers not to be deceived (literally, to "stop being led astray"), for no one can "thumb a nose" at God (God is not mocked) without experiencing devastating results. Whatever seeds a person sows will yield a harvest in kind (see Job 4:8). The person can expect that exact harvest, not something else. Paul well may have referred to the material support of teachers he encouraged in verse 6, but he likely had a broader application in mind.

6:8. Believers could choose to sow to their flesh. They could devote themselves and their goods to self-indulgence that the old self (the flesh) desired. If they did so, their harvest would be corruption—moral and spiritual ruin. Today, people thumb their noses at God when they view salvation as liberty to sin freely, presuming on God's forgiveness. Such an approach calls into serious question the genuineness of their commitment to Christ. If, however, believers sow to the Spirit—that is, invest themselves and their goods in the sphere the Spirit

governs—the Spirit will produce the harvest of eternal life. Paul’s use of the future tense (“will reap”) suggests he had in mind the final harvest of endless life with God.

6:9. One important aspect of sowing to the Spirit is persistently doing good. The phrase may refer specifically to supporting Christian teachers but likely is broader to include good deeds in general. The Greek term for “get tired” has the idea of becoming physically fatigued and of becoming faint-hearted. Christians could become discouraged and disillusioned in doing good and could be tempted to quit. Believers who persevere in well-doing, however, will reap a harvest at the proper time (or “season”)—refined character, spiritual growth, and fulfillment in this life and endless life with God in the next.

| Luke 14:7-14

14:7-13. Jesus selected the contents of the parable on the basis of what was happening in the banquet. The best places at a dinner were next to the host. Jesus’ parable made the point that the danger of arrogantly taking the best place at a banquet was that the person who invited you—here representing God—could ask you to move to the lowest place at the banquet table, causing humiliation rather than honor. It was wiser to sit in the seat of the humble and then be asked to move up to a seat of higher honor. The point was clear: If you try to gain honor for yourself, you will be humbled and humiliated. But if you show humility, then you will receive great honor.

14:14. In contrast to Luke 6:20-22, which speaks of a present blessed state, this blessing occurs in the future at the resurrection. God will bless/repay. Jesus’ belief in the resurrection coincided with that of the Pharisees as opposed to the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection (Acts 23:8).

| Luke 6:32-35

6:32-33 Those who follow the Golden Rule live unselfishly. Jesus called for bold application of the Golden Rule. Jesus pointed out that even sinners love those who love them. Giving love in exchange for love requires no sacrifice. Giving love to those who refuse to love you in return takes something out of you. Jesus turned to an example of Christians who lend. Although Jewish law prohibited collecting interest on a loan, most lenders found ways to get around the law. For instance, in-kind goods or services might be paid the lender instead of monetary interest. Christians are to lend for a different reason: to provide an advantage to the borrower instead of to oneself.

6:35-36 Jesus restated His life principle to love your enemies and do what is good. In similar

fashion, He encouraged the disciples to lend, expecting nothing in return. This kind of behavior carries a reward. Jesus never taught that this great reward would be material in nature. Instead, Christians receive the reward of eternal life in God's grace.