

What Does the Bible Say About Getting Revenge?

Lakewood Family Church | Pastor Jonathan L. Vorce | April 19, 2026

Main Text: **Matthew 5:38-42** (NKJV)

“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.”

Introduction

- In a world obsessed with “payback,” “cancel culture,” and viral revenge stories, many of us carry quiet grudges—against the coworker who betrayed us, the family member who hurt us, or even the stranger who cut us off in traffic.
- Today we ask a life-changing question: **What does the Bible actually say about getting revenge?**
- **Thesis:** Jesus calls us to release the desire for personal revenge and respond instead with radical, surprising grace—because revenge belongs to God, not to us.

I. The Old Standard: “An Eye for an Eye” (**Matthew 5:38**)

- A. This principle, rooted in the Old Testament law (**Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20; Deuteronomy 19:21**), was never meant to fuel personal vendettas but to establish limits on retaliation.
 1. This Old Testament principle *“An Eye for an Eye”* was never meant to license revenge but to limit it and follow the wisdom found in the Word of God.
 2. It was God’s wise safeguard — making punishment equal to the offense so that revenge would not spiral into endless cycles of violence and escalation.

- B. Jesus is quoting the Old Testament standard not to abolish it but to fulfill it by raising the bar from “limited revenge” to “no personal revenge.”

♦ **Life Illustration:** Think of today’s court system or even traffic laws. The law says the punishment must fit the crime so that one speeding ticket doesn’t become a lifelong family feud. Yet many in Jesus’ day (and many today) twisted it into a license for personal payback — “You hurt me, so I’ll hurt you back twice as hard.”

II. Jesus’ Revolutionary Command: Do Not Resist an Evil Person (Matthew 5:39a)

- A. Jesus is not teaching absolute passivity, cowardice, or that we should never seek justice through proper legal or governmental channels (Romans 13:1-4).

1. He is calling us to refuse personal retaliation in our everyday relationships and to trust God with our defense and ultimate justice (Romans 12:19).

- B. This command flips the script: instead of matching evil with evil, we overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21), reflecting the very character of our Father who sends rain on the just and the unjust.

♦ **Life Illustration:** A coworker spreads false rumors about you, and you lose a promotion. The old way says, “I’ll ruin their reputation too — tit for tat.” Jesus says, “Do not resist an evil person” by stooping to their level — instead, choose the higher road of grace, pray for them, and let God fight your battles.

III. Four Practical Expressions of Kingdom Living (Matthew 5:39b-42)

- A. Turn the Other Cheek — Responding to Personal Insults with Humility

1. When someone slaps you on the right cheek (a deep cultural insult meant to humiliate and demean), Jesus says offer the left cheek as well — refusing to escalate or retaliate.
2. This is not about inviting abuse but about refusing to let the offender control your response or drag you down to their level.

- ◆ **Application:** In family arguments, online comments, or workplace slights — choose humility over honor. Your response becomes a powerful testimony.

B. Give Your Cloak Also — Going Beyond What Is Legally Demanded

1. If someone sues you and takes your tunic (your inner shirt — the basic necessity), Jesus says let them have your cloak (your outer coat — your protection from the cold) as well.
2. This goes far beyond the letter of the law, showing extravagant generosity even when you are in the right.

- ◆ **Application:** When someone takes advantage of you financially or legally, ask the Holy Spirit, “Lord, how can I give more than they demand and point them to You?”

C. Go the Second Mile — Cheerfully Exceeding Forced Obligations

1. Roman soldiers could legally compel a Jewish citizen to carry their gear for one mile; Jesus says go two miles willingly and cheerfully.
2. This turns an act of forced oppression into an opportunity for voluntary service and witness.
3. **Life Illustration:** Your boss piles on extra work that isn’t in your job description, or a family member repeatedly asks for favors that feel one-sided. Instead of grumbling, doing the bare minimum, or silently resenting it, you do it with excellence and a smile — turning resentment into an opportunity to glorify God and open doors for gospel conversations.

- ◆ **Application:** In customer service, parenting, or church volunteering — refuse to keep score; go the extra mile and watch God bless your attitude.

D. Give to Him Who Asks and Do Not Turn Away the Borrower — Radical Generosity

1. Open your hand freely to the one who asks, and do not turn away the one who wants to borrow — without demanding repayment guarantees or perfect credit.
2. This is about trusting God as your ultimate Provider rather than protecting your resources out of fear or self-interest.

- ◆ **Application:** Practice this in small ways first — buying a meal for the person on the street, lending your tools without expecting them back in perfect condition — and let it become a lifestyle of open-handed living.

Conclusion

- **Summary:** Jesus replaces the old law of limited revenge with a new kingdom ethic of non-retaliation, extravagant generosity, and complete trust in the Father who judges perfectly.
- **Personal Challenge:** This week, ask the Holy Spirit to show you one area where you're holding onto revenge — a grudge, a silent resentment, a plan to “get even,” or even a cold shoulder you've been giving someone. Surrender it to Jesus today and choose the way of the cross instead.
- **Encouragement:** When we live this way, we experience freedom from bitterness, become powerful witnesses for Christ in a vengeful world, and reflect the same grace that saved us when we were God's enemies (Romans 5:8, 10).

Prayer

Let's pray together right now and ask God to make us people who turn the other cheek, go the second mile, and give freely — for His glory and our joy.

Invitation: If you've never experienced the forgiveness of Jesus, today is the day to receive His grace and begin this new way of living. Come forward as we sing — the altar is open for anyone who wants prayer to release revenge and receive the power of the Holy Spirit.