


Radical Faith:  
The Hard Sayings of Jesus  
Part 2: Radical Love

# TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS



A publication of , the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

**Talk** together about the glory of God's kingdom. —Psalm 145:11  
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. —Joshua 22:5

## Questions for Reflection

- Pastor Doug noted that the Bible's rule of "an eye for an eye" **limited** retribution, not **increasing** it. Tell about a time when you witnessed an **escalating** response to an offense (in word or deed).

How have you seen American society degenerate as a result of rejecting this biblical wisdom?

Read Matthew 5:38-39. Tell about a time you witnessed a deliberate **desecration** of hostility.

- Pastor Doug noted that "gentle" in Philippians 4:5 means to "voluntarily give up our rights". Read Philippians 2:5-8. How do v. 6-8 illustrate "voluntarily giving up rights"?

What does v. 5 command us to do? What might that look like in your life today?

- Read Matthew 22:39. How does love **enlarge** our response to situations?

How might love **limit** our response in some situations? How do we find the biblical balance?

- Read Romans 12:17. Notice that both commands do not allow for **any** exceptions: **negatively** we may "**never repay evil to anyone**", and **positively** we must "**respect what's right in the sight of all men**"—including the person who did evil to us! Clearly, obeying these commands requires supernatural enabling! How have you seen this command ignored in church life?

What might happen in our families, churches, and neighborhoods if Christians obeyed this command?

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## Application-Challenge

- Determine to glorify God by being generous towards others. Never repay evil with evil. Give a blessing instead.
- Meditate on Romans 12:21, 1 Thessalonians 5:14 & Proverbs 15:1.

**Take One Step:** What is one small, concrete step of obedience you will put into practice this week?



# Sermon Summary

We are in a series of messages where we are studying some of the hard sayings of Jesus. And it doesn't get any easier this week, as we look at Matthew 5:38-42. Jesus begins by saying, "You have heard that it was said," and then he quotes an Old Testament law from the Book of Exodus, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' This stipulation stood in stark contrast to how the other nations dealt with personal injuries. Prior to the giving of the Mosaic Law, the world's ethic was "Unlimited Revenge." In other words, if you killed my daughter, I wouldn't just kill yours, I might just exact my revenge by killing your entire family. In fact, it might ignite a feud between us that would go on for generations.

It was in that context that the Word of God came to replace the world's ethic of unlimited revenge with the legal, civil ethic of limited punishment, where the punishment fit the crime. Our legal system today is set up on the same principle. This law, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,' was intended to eliminate the ethic of unlimited retaliation which was, again, the prevailing ethic of the day. It was never God's intention that this law be executed on a personal level. It was for the civil courts. So when Jesus says, "You have heard it said...but I say," he is not disagreeing with this law. He is merely arguing that it's meant to be applied at the government level, not the personal one.

You see, because of the hardness of man's heart, the law permitted, at a civil level, punishment that fit the crime. But at the personal level, God wants us to put the thought of retaliation completely out of our mind. And that is what Jesus goes on to talk about here. He says, "But I say to you, do not resist an evil person..." He goes on to give several illustrations of what that might look like. Now, one of the greatest insults in that society was for someone to slap you in public. If they really wanted to shame you, they would slap you backhanded. Jesus says, if someone does that, tell him to slap the other side of your face while he's at it. That is tough thing to hear. Jesus goes on to say that if someone sues you for your shirt, offer him your coat, too. Now that was really saying something, because people normally only had one coat. They wore it as an outer garment during the day, and it was used as a covering at night to keep warm. Because a man's coat doubled as his bedding, biblical law allowed you to sue a man for his coat but you had to give it back by nightfall (Ex. 22:26-27; Deut. 24:12-13). And Jesus says, "Give him your coat as well." And then he says, "If someone compels you to go with them a mile, go with them two miles."

In Jesus' day, Israel was under Roman rule. And there was a law that allowed Roman soldiers to compel citizens to carry their load for up to a mile. And the Jewish people resented that. They would do it grudgingly, probably whispering curse words under their breath, and stomping---looking for that mile marker. And when they saw it, before the soldier could reach out and take his sack, they would just drop it in the dirt. Jesus said if a Roman soldier makes you carry his pack one mile when you got to the mile marker, as he reaches out to grab his pack before you throw it into the dirt, just smile at him and say, "You know, I think I'll just carry this for you another mile!" And that generous response will shock him. He will wonder why you are different as a follower of Christ.

Jesus goes on to say, "Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you" (Matthew 5:42). In these cases, Jesus is talking about a generosity of spirit. He is talking about non-resistance. He is talking about not returning insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead. But he is not meaning to imply unlimited generosity. Jesus wants us to pay attention to people's needs. For example, in this last illustration Jesus gives us, he doesn't tell us how much to give someone who asks something from you. He just says, "Don't turn them away... if it is within your power to help."

We need to be generous enough toward this person to have the power of "going the second mile." We need to be generous enough that it shocks the person...in a good way. In a way that they catch a glimpse of God's love. The law says, "Go the first mile." Love says, "Go the second mile!" The Bible says that "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Proverbs 15:1). The next time you find yourself in a tense situation, apply this verse. Rather than escalate the conflict with a harsh word, deescalate it with a gentle response. Turn the other cheek, go the extra mile and see what God does.

Church, it works. That is why we are here today. Jesus did more than just turn the other cheek. He laid down his life for us. He is not asking us to do anything that he hasn't already done. It works....and it is life-changing.

## Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

**1 Corinthians 13 has the most exalted description of biblical love, and many a starrey-eyed lover has chosen to read as part of their wedding ceremony. But Jesus says that we must have this same sort of love for our enemies! But what does loving my enemy look like?**

- **Think of the name of a person with whom you have open hostilities or veiled hatred, then...**
- **Carefully read 1 Corinthians 13:1-7 (below) and ask yourself the following questions:**

*<sup>1</sup> If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn't love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup> If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God's secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn't love others, I would be nothing. <sup>3</sup> If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would have gained nothing. <sup>4</sup> Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud <sup>5</sup> or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. <sup>6</sup> It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. <sup>7</sup> Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance. <sup>8</sup> Love lasts forever.*

1. How do I show off my proficiency/competence instead of really loving [name] (v. 1)?
2. How do I show off my intelligence/knowledge instead of really loving [name] (v. 2)?
3. How do I try to appear generous toward [name] without really loving him/her (v. 3)?
4. How have I been impatient with [name] (v. 4)?
5. How have I been unkind to [name] (v. 4)?
6. How have I been jealous toward [name] (v. 4)?
7. About what do I typically brag/boast to [name] (v. 4)?
8. About what am I proud when I compare myself to [name] (v. 4)?
9. How have I been rude to [name] (v. 5)?
10. How have I demanded my own way when relating to [name] (v. 5)?
11. How am I irritable with [name] in ways that I'm not with others (v. 5)?
12. What's on my mental list of ways [name] has wronged me (v. 5)?
13. When have I been glad to see [name] "get what she deserves" or "be put in his place" (v. 6)?
14. What truths have I covered up or been glad [name] doesn't know (v. 6)?
15. What partial-truths or outright lies have I told [name] (v. 6)?
16. What have I done to give [name] a mis-impression of what was true (v. 6)?
17. In what situations with [name] have I decided "enough is enough!" (v. 7)?
18. In what areas with regards to [name] have I quit doing my best (v. 7)?
19. In what areas have I ceased giving [name] "the benefit of the doubt" (v. 7)?
20. In what areas do I no longer "hope for the best for [name]" (v. 7)?
21. What behaviors/situations with [name] do I no longer put up with (v. 7)?
22. To love is "to will the good of another", so what "good" have I refused to want for [name] (v. 8)?