

## How did you get on with KEEPING SILENT FOR FOUR HOURS? Shhh!

This week's message from Jesus is about 'learning to bless those who curse us'. **Read Matthew 5: 38 - 42.**

**Q: How do we react to physical or verbal violence? How do we react to rudeness or another's fury?**

### 1. What does Matthew 5: 38-42 really mean?

- **V. 38.** This is in the OT Law, does it give us permission to exact retribution when we are hurt? Can this law be used in a case of minor disagreeableness? 'You hurt me ..... I get to hurt you OK!'
- But even in its OT context this law is restraining retribution. **Lev. 24:19-20.** Given the chance, a molested person will hit back twice as hard and a nation will fight its enemy even harder. It establishes equitable justice and a legal precedent for treating everyone the same, whatever their social status.
- **Q: have we any childhood experiences which taught us to meet violence with greater force?**

### 2. Again Jesus says 'But I tell you' .....

- It's not about becoming passive victims of abuse, it's about forgoing your just claim to equal retribution.
  - **V. 39.** The blow described was a 'back-hander'. This was regarded as an insult and was punishable by law. Jesus says choose to 'turn the other cheek' instead of insisting on your 'rights'.
  - **V. 40.** If a poor person owed money to a richer he would have had to provide his tunic as a security. If, later, he couldn't pay, the lender could keep the tunic. However, Jews were not allowed to take someone's cloak – the outer garment that was all he had for warmth and decency, and which doubled as a blanket. **Exodus 22: 25-27.** Jesus says 'offer him your cloak as well'. Go beyond the call of duty.
  - **V. 41.** By law, a Roman soldier (the oppressor) could force you (the oppressed) to carry his kit-bag for a mile ..... Jesus says 'exceed justice: offer to go a second mile for him'. Go to mercy and grace.
  - **V. 42.** The dominant culture was to give money only to relatives and even then give the minimum. **Deut. 15:7-8.** Jesus removes the restrictions and says 'be merciful and gracious to anyone'. Begging requires humility, giving freely is to be courageous and trust in God for our security.
- All four of these situations make us vulnerable, they make us expose ourselves ..... to ourselves. But in a position of 'Kingdom of God security' we do not need to retaliate, there is another way.
- **Q: Can we think of examples of someone going beyond the call of duty? Have we a personal story?**

### 3. What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with your God? Micah 6:8

- But we don't. We've lied, wronged someone, been jealous, mishandled relationships & offended people. 'An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind' (Ghandi). In a world of equal justice, we'd all be dead.
- **Job 33: 23-28** is a beautiful flash of OT inspiration into what Jesus would do for Job and for us. **V. 23**, for 'angel' read 'representative' and for 'mediator' read 'advocate'.
- **Romans 3:23ff** reminds us we have all sinned and fallen short of God's standards, but Jesus knew that all along and also knew He would be the One to shed His blood – to pay for our sins and win our redemption. God the gracious and merciful Judge is both wholly Just and also the One who Justifies the faithful who believe that Jesus is LORD.
- **The way of the Kingdom is the way of the King.** Having received such mercy from our King, we must work to extend His Kingdom. This will involve us in embracing the personal cost of mercy. Christ was merciful to us and it involved thorns, nails and His shed blood. What is your 'just claim' that you need to let go of and forgive, whatever the personal cost?

---

### Soul Training Exercise: Praying for the success of competitors.

1. Jesus is asking us to bless those who would like to harm or even kill us. This may be a bit extreme so instead pray for the success a competitor: someone whose success would diminish yours in business, in sports, as a parent with competing children, or who hates to see you progress.
  2. Or pray for someone who is a difficult person in your life and is always causing problems. It will be hard at first but be patient and you will appreciate why Jesus tells us to pray for our enemies.
- Questions throughout Chapter 7 of 'The Good and beautiful Life' by James Bryan Smith and on pages 236-239.