

TEXT Matthew 5:38-48; Romans 12:17-21

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURE Acts 7:57-60

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to explain that the spirit of non-retaliation to their enemies is commanded by God and is a true mark of a Christian.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you. — Matthew 5:44

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth. — Proverbs 24:17

**ANSWER
TITLE:** **Facing Up to It**
**SEARCH
TITLE:** **Non-Retaliation**

REFERENCE INFORMATION

Summary of Matthew 5:38-48: Jesus did not come to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it. The Law was a minimum standard, and could only deal with actions and not with the thoughts that give rise to them. So Jesus came to give the Law a deeper meaning and to enforce it, not only in outward actions but in the deep workings of the heart. Jesus also came to give us power to live according to His instructions.

The Court System: Israel had a dual system of courts. The nation elected judges to hear civil lawsuits, while the Levites judged religious matters (Deuteronomy 17:8-13; 2 Chronicles 19:8,11). The Law required witnesses to tell the truth or suffer the same penalty as the accused one

(Deuteronomy 19:16-19). Two or three witnesses had to give consonant testimony in order to convict a person of a serious crime. A person could not be convicted on the basis of only one witness's testimony (Deuteronomy 17:6). Anyone who refused to accept the verdict of the court could be put to death (Deuteronomy 17:12,13). Each person knew the Law and the penalty for breaking it. Often the whole community punished the lawbreaker, as all the people were required to uphold the Law. Judges represented God, but they were also to represent the law-abiding community. Verdicts were announced publicly at the city gate. Usually the victim's next of kin was the executioner (Deuteronomy 19:11,12).

YOUR OPENER

Non-Retaliation

TEXT: Matthew 5:38-48; Romans 12:17-21

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURE: Acts 7:57-60

KEY VERSE: Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth. — Proverbs 24:17

RESPONSES

1. We are not to fight back, and we should be willing to take extra steps, if necessary, to show a Christian example. Ask your students if they can relate any experiences of their own, or another's, which demonstrates this principle. How was the situation handled with God's help? Point out that the actions of those in opposition to us may not always be by physical conflict. It may take the form of verbal abuse, persecution, or ostracism. This, too, must be responded to in the same Christian way.

2. Jesus said our reward will be great and that we will be the children of God. Ask your students what they feel the reward might be. They should conclude that many times, if we have the right attitude when handling a problem, God will not only work out the problem for our good but will give a rich blessing to us here and now. Bring out, too, that there will be times when we may not see any obvious blessing, and our enemies may prosper, but God is taking note and our eternal reward will be sure.

3. If God's love is in us, we should bless those who curse us, do good to those who hate us, and pray for those who treat us badly. Ask how praying for those who dislike us, can bring positive results. In response to the second question, you may come up with an example such as the Philippian jailer in Acts 16:29-34. Another beautiful illustration is given in Tract No. 79A, *For Another's Crime*.

4. Discussion of this question should bring out the necessity of a Christian's practicing non-retaliation, being completely honest in all his dealings, and living peaceably regardless of provocation. Ask your students to discuss what the results will be if they follow these instructions, guiding them to realize that they can expect God to be with them and work out His will in each situation they face, even though that situation may be disagreeable.

Down through the ages, Christians have continually been opposed by Satan and his followers. The human instinct, when one has been attacked or injured, is to respond with vengeance and inflict punishment. However, God's Word teaches us that as Christians we are not to retaliate, and that His Spirit dwelling in us will give us power to stand even though we are afflicted or persecuted.

1. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave us many instructions concerning Christian living. What did He say about our attitude toward those who would do us harm?

2. If we show love for our enemies, what has God promised to give us in return? See Luke 6:35,36.

3. What actions will we take toward our enemies if God's love is abiding in us? (Luke 6:27,28) Give an example, Biblical or otherwise, of one who was eventually brought to the Lord through a Christian's acting in this manner.

4. What responsibility does Romans 12:17,18 place on a Christian regarding his actions, whether in the company of believers or non-believers.

19

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

5. What is the general attitude of the non-Christian toward someone who does him wrong? (Proverbs 24:29) What should the Christian's attitude be toward someone who does him wrong? See 1 Peter 3:9.

6. How did the Christians retaliate when Satan's efforts threatened the Early Church? See Acts 4:15-31.

7. Previous questions have dealt with our reactions when attacked by an enemy. However, Satan often tries to bring disunity or hard feelings even between the brethren in Christ. When a difference arises, what are some ways we might be tempted to retaliate? What are some of the ways we can resist a response which would not be pleasing to Christ?

8. What should one do if faced with an enemy's threats which could cause one to compromise his Christian principles? See Acts 5:27-29.

9. What does Peter tell us we should do when we are reproached by others and suffer because we are Christians? See 1 Peter 4:12-16.

5. The non-Christian's reaction is: "I will do to him as he has done to me." On the other hand, the Christian will not give evil for evil, but rather blessing. These two reactions show a direct contrast. Ask your students what will happen if, instead of repaying their enemy as he has done to them, they do just the opposite? Help the group see that the sinner cannot understand someone's repaying evil with good. In these situations, many times the Holy Spirit can convict of sin because of the Christian's showing love instead of retaliation.

6. The first point to be made is that the Christians did not retaliate at all. Rather, they began to pray with one accord. Ask your class what the disciples sought for at this time. Bring out that they desired God to grant them boldness to speak His Word. God honored their prayers and filled them with the Holy Ghost, empowering them to continue to proclaim the Word of God fearlessly.

7. Your students' discussion of the first question will likely bring up some thoughts such as: to vociferously defend oneself, to reply harshly or in anger, to complain to others of unjust treatment, to accuse the one who accused you. As your class talks about the second part of the question, point them to 1 Corinthians 13. An application of these verses will bring about a response that will be pleasing to Christ.

8. Peter shows us that God's laws are supreme, and are to be obeyed even if contrary to the laws of man. But even then no physical retaliation is permissible. Many have gone to prison and to death rather than compromise God's principles.

9. We should be happy and rejoice. Ask your students what we should do if this seems impossible. Bring out that many Christians down through the years, with the same human frailties as ours, have been able to rejoice in spirit because they knew they were suffering according to the will of God and had committed the keeping of their souls to Him (1 Peter 4:19). Experience has found that thankfulness and rejoicing are a sure road to victory.

YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

If you “turned the other cheek” at school what would the other kids think?

Have you ever seen someone do that? If so, what did you think?

In what way can we do good to those who hate us?

How might one spitefully use you?

What is the point to be made in verses 46 and 47 of Matthew 5?

How can we overcome evil with good? Give some examples.

How can you love your enemies?

What does Romans 12:19 mean, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord”?

In the ANSWER story, didn’t Jim really have a right to get even with Tom? After all, Tom started the trouble. What did the principal require of Jim? Do you think either Jim or Tom was a Christian? Why or why not?

THINGS TO DO

Ask your students to read silently the Bible text for this lesson. (Provide extra Bibles for those who forget to bring their own.) When they finish reading, or when the allotted time is up, reread parts of the text to them, but add an occasional false fact or detail that isn’t in the original. Before you begin your oral version, tell your students that every time you say something not in the original text, they are to clap their hands. Each time they clap, ask them to tell you what error you made. Continue until you have covered the entire text.

Show your students something that looks like gold but isn’t. If you can locate some fool’s gold, that would be fine. Explain how people can be fooled by what looks like gold but under the proper heat one will see the difference between the real and the counterfeit. So it is with the one who professes Christianity and the one who possesses it. When the heat is on, especially between our fellowman and us, our actions or reactions make the difference as to whether we are real Christians or not.

After showing your students a light bulb, ask them if they can tell by just looking (not holding) whether it is a good light bulb or not. Some may guess correctly and some probably will guess wrong. The test comes when the bulb is screwed into the socket and the switch is turned on. Just so, when we are among a lot of people we may not be noticed or marked as Christians, but when a negative confrontation with someone takes place, whether it be a disagreement, false accusation, etc., our Christian light will shine if we act the way Jesus wants us to act.

Demonstrate to your students that a pen with no ink may look good and appears to be usable, but when it is put to the test it is worthless. Bring out that many people today look good and appear to be Christians, but how they act or react with others under trying circumstances tells what they really are because, “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”

Answers for ANSWER

Right From Romans

Match the beginnings and endings of the verses from Romans 12. Write the correct numbers on the lines given. When matched correctly, there will be twelve things you can do to live pleasing to God.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be kindly affectioned 10. Not slothful 11. Given to 9. Bless them 12. Rejoice with them 4. Provide things honest 5. Live peaceably 7. Weep with them 3. Avenge not 6. Overcome evil 8. Continuing instant 2. Recompense to no man evil 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. one to another (vs. 10) 2. for evil (vs. 17) 3. yourselves (vs. 19) 4. in the sight of all men (vs. 17) 5. with all men (vs. 18) 6. with good (vs. 21) 7. that weep (vs. 15) 8. in prayer (vs. 12) 9. which persecute you (vs. 14) 10. in business (vs. 11) 11. hospitality (vs. 13) 12. that do rejoice (vs. 15)
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