



Part 7: A New Kind of Instinct

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When we get into conflict, we choose either fight or flight.

Even in stress, even when life is most difficult,
we can respond like kingdom citizens.

Matthew 5:38-39a

"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person.

The Scholar's Bible translation: "Don't react violently against someone who is evil."

What are our options toward violence?

Some people think that the best way to oppose violence is with violence.

Some people think that the best way to oppose violence is to be passive.

Jesus taught a third way. A new way. A kingdom way.

Matthew 5:39b

If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.

Jesus believes all people are equal and he's calling you to stand up for yourself.

Matthew 5:40-41

And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles.

Jesus is teaching us to literally rebel against human instinct.

Matthew 5:42-47

Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?"

Jesus is again reinforcing his kingdom ethic: everyone matters.

Matthew 5:48

Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

God is not going to lower the standard of Kingdom of Heaven to accommodate anyone.

So, how do we gain something we can't achieve and honor the nature of something we can't change?

The simple answer is this: Apart from Jesus, you can't do this.

Small Group Questions

1. As we turn from spring to summer, what are you looking forward to in the coming months? Any plans, big or small?
2. If Jesus' pattern in the Sermon on the Mount has been to look beyond outward behavior to inner attitudes, what heart issue(s) do you think he's getting at in this difficult passage?
3. What's your most frequent response to conflict – fight or flight? How has that been helpful or harmful in your relationships?
4. How would you picture Jesus' third response to violence applied practically in conflicts that you face? What might that look like? (Your group members may have ideas to offer that you haven't thought of. Don't be afraid to help each other on this one!)
5. How can we pray for you right now and throughout the week?

OUR MISSION | To create an authentic Christian community that effectively reaches out to unchurched people in love, acceptance and forgiveness so that they may experience the joy of salvation and a purposeful life of discipleship.