

Jesus on the Fat Hill: Reach Up for Integrity – Matthew 5:38-48

“More is better.” More muscle, more money, more fun, more experiences, more education, more romance, more time for yourself, more... You fill in the blank. All of our lives we have been taught that “more is better” and “less if for some unfortunate person who does not quite have what it takes.”

In fact, one church in Springfield, IL has the motto “more Lord.” They want their people to seek out God more in their lives. This sounds great, but how do you do that?

I want you to consider something today: there is more of God in your life when you do the opposite to what your flesh tells you to do. Instead of seeking more rights, more money, more entitlements, we should seek to give more. Then we can truly experience “more Lord.”

Sometimes, however, this is extremely difficult. How do you give more, when there are those who want to take, take, take! We all have experienced these people: the pushy people, the mean-hearted, those who grate on our nerves. Everybody deals with the sandpaper people in their life—people who rub you the wrong way, often leaving abrasions behind!

How do you react to people who make life difficult for you? We all encounter people who are hard to live with. How do you treat the “sandpaper people” in your life?

Jesus gave us some direct instruction on sandpaper people – Turn to Matthew 5:38

1. In this section of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus raised the bar for His followers:
 - a. Don't resist an evil person.
 - b. Don't try to get even.
 - c. Go the extra mile
 - d. Give to those who ask
 - e. Turn the other cheek.
2. Jesus taught His followers that they should respond differently than the world does. They should respond the opposite to what their own carnal flesh tells them.
3. What Jesus is teaching us here in this section is impossible to follow unless we are energized by the power of the Holy Spirit within!
4. Chuck Swindoll, in the book *Simple Faith* said, “In my opinion, Jesus' words recorded in Matt. 5:38-48, are among the most unusual He ever uttered. The strange-sounding advice not only cuts cross-grain against our human nature, it also represents the antithesis of the advice most Americans are given. Nevertheless, His words are wise and His way is right. If we will only give them a

chance, we will discover how true and – yes, once again – how simple His advice really is.”

Before we look phrase by phrase at this passage, there are two basic principles about interpreting and applying the Bible that are important in understanding what exactly Jesus is saying.

First, Jesus sometimes used a method of teaching that was popular in that day called hyperbole.

1. The Jewish Rabbis would sometimes use hyperbole to deliberately overstate their case or emphasize just one side of a truth to motivate students to look at it with a fresh perspective.
2. For example, someone today might say, “I’ve told you a thousand times; don’t exaggerate!” That is hyperbole.
3. Jesus said one time in Luke 14:26, “Unless you hate your mother and Father you can’t be my disciple.” That is hyperbole.
 - a. Jesus obviously overstating the case to illustrate that there was to be a much greater allegiance to God than to mother and father.

So there are times that Jesus’ teaching is to be taken seriously but not literally, or you’ll wind up being legalistic or setting yourself up for failure.

The second principle in understanding this section of the Sermon on the Mount is that Jesus words have to be interpreted in light of other Scripture.

God’s Word does not contradict itself. Rather, it is the best interpreter of itself.

With those principles in mind, let’s look at this section that talks about how we should treat sandpaper people.

READ Matthew 5:38-39

Jesus tells us to:

- I. LOVE MORE – when sandpaper people humiliate us!
 - A. In fact, Jesus straight out calls what sandpaper people do to us, evil. He calls them “evil people.”
 - B. He begins by saying, “You have heard it said, ‘An eye for an eye.’”
 1. This was the Old Testament system of justice.
 2. It was God’s teaching of what to do when we have resentment; when we want retaliation, retribution, and revenge.
 3. It was meant to prevent crime, establish justice, and avoid overreaction by providing fair and equitable punishment.

- a. By Jesus' time it had been replaced by monetary penalties. Instead of an eye, the people were to give the monetary equivalent of an eye.
- 4. But Jesus raised the bar.
 - a. He said, "I tell you, don't resist an evil person."
 - b. What exactly is Jesus talking about?
 - a. I don't see Jesus talking about national defense or security.
 - i. Some groups use this particular scripture to say we should be pacifists and never join the military.
 - ii. However, when Jesus talks about the striking on the right cheek, Jesus is actually addressing a personal insult.
 - 1. Most of the world is right handed. A right handed person cannot strike someone on the right cheek with the intention to harm. A right handed person would strike someone on the right cheek with a backhand slap.
 - iii. Jesus is saying that we should absorb insults rather than always retaliating. If all we ever did was to continually seek retribution from those who injure us with insults, we'd all be walking around blind and toothless.
 - b. I also don't see Jesus talking about a woman who is being abused by her husband.
 - i. I have heard women use this passage saying that Jesus wants them to stay continuing to put themselves in danger.
 - ii. When Jesus faced the threat of physical attack in Luke 4:29-30, He simply walked through the crowd and left.
 - iii. His resistance of the evil person in this case, was to allow them to deal with their anger on their own. This is the ultimate loving way.

Jesus wants us each to love more, no matter what situation we are in.

Jesus says:

- 1. LOVE MORE – even when sandpaper people humiliate us!
- II. LOVE MORE – even when sandpaper want to sue us! READ Matthew 5:40
 - A. In Jesus' day, there was a difference between the tunic and the cloak.
 - 1. The tunic was the garment worn closest to the skin
 - 2. The cloak was the outer garment that doubled at night as a blanket.

- a. The Old Testament, in Exodus 22, teaches that every person had an absolute right to his cloak, since it was vital to existence.
- b. It was not allowed to sue for another's cloak. Even if you did, God's Law required you to give it back before nightfall.
3. Jesus said if a sandpaper person wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.
 - a. In other words, if he's that desperate, give up your basic rights.
 - b. Don't demand your rights all the time.
- B. That kind of thinking goes absolutely contrary to our gut instinct.
 1. It's inborn to protect yourself. We think, "I need to get even. I can't let him get by with that! It is my right to get back at him!"
 2. Jesus is saying, "don't always insist on your rights." We think each of us have certain rights:
 - a. My "right" to dignity ... to be treated without insult
 - b. My "right" to comfort ... to cling to what pleases me
 - c. My "right" to privacy ... to do only what I prefer
 - d. My "right" to possessions ... to keep all I wish.

Jesus says that as His followers, we shouldn't focus so much on our rights but focus on what is right – According to God, it is right to love more than expected!

Eugene Peterson paraphrases this passage in *The Message*: "If someone sues for the shirt off your back, gift-wrap your best coat and make a present of it."

Jesus says:

1. LOVE MORE – even when sandpaper people humiliate us!
2. LOVE MORE – even when sandpaper people want to sue us!

III. LOVE MORE –even when sandpaper people make unreasonable demands.

READ Matthew 5:41

A. The word "forces" is a word that means, "press into service."

1. There was a Roman law that gave their soldiers the right to force civilians into service for a period. --You couldn't refuse or you would be severely punished
2. But there were limitations. --For example, a Roman soldier had a right to make you carry his pack for one mile, but not any further.
3. Jesus said, "If a soldier demands you carry his equipment for a mile go with him two miles."

B. We all have people who have authority over us.

1. If they are enamored with their power they can make life miserable.
2. The natural instinct is to find some way to resist.

C. But Jesus raised the standard, don't just go a mile, go two miles.

1. It's amazing how much better we feel about ourselves when we go the extra mile.
 2. It's amazing how quickly most relationships are smoothed over when we do more than expected.
 3. What a testimony to the work of Christ in our life when we perform the extra-mile service with a smile instead of grumbling and complaining the whole time and stop at the exact mile marker.
- D. When sandpaper people make unreasonable demands:
1. First you are not to do anything unethical or illegal.
 2. Second, you have a right to work someplace else.
 3. Third, You have a right to confront and not just be run over. Acts 22:25-29 – As they stretched him out to flog him, Paul said to the centurion standing there, “Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who hasn't even been found guilty?” When the centurion heard this, he went to the commander and reported it. “What are you going to do?” he asked. “This man is a Roman citizen.” The commander went to Paul and asked, “Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?” “Yes, I am,” he answered. Then the commander said, “I had to pay a big price for my citizenship.” “But I was born a citizen,” Paul replied. Those who were about to question him withdrew immediately. The commander himself was alarmed when he realized that he had put Paul, a Roman citizen, in chains.

Jesus says:

1. LOVE MORE – even when sandpaper people humiliate us!
2. LOVE MORE – even when sandpaper people want to sue us!
3. LOVE MORE – even when sandpaper people make unreasonable demands!

IV. LOVE MORE – even when sandpaper people are needy! READ Matthew 4:42

A. Sometimes we are too quick to point out that there's a difference between Jesus' day and ours.

1. In Jesus' time people begged on the streets as their only means of survival.
2. We have so many agencies today requesting help in addition to the church. The people today can usually find someone who can help them. We think that no one actually starves in America.
3. But Jesus said, “Give to those who ask, don't turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.”
 - a. Rather than finding out how much we are able to borrow, we need to examine how much we are able to give.
 - b. Rather than focusing on what we can get, we should rather center on what we are able to give.

- c. If we work hard to find a reason not to give, it's probably because we want to follow our natural instincts rather than walking by the Spirit.
- B. There are times, however, when it is more harmful to give:
 - 1. You don't give children everything they ask for.
 - 2. We are instructed not to give to a person who can work but refuses to work. 2 Thessalonians 3:10 – *If a man will not work, he shall not eat.*
 - 3. We shouldn't give money to a person we're sure will spend it on something destructive.
 - a. Giving to the homeless at PCTC – bought them a meal rather than just giving them money.

Jesus says:

- 1. LOVE MORE – even when sandpaper people humiliate us!
 - 2. LOVE MORE – even when sandpaper people want to sue us!
 - 3. LOVE MORE – even when sandpaper people make unreasonable demands!
 - 4. LOVE MORE – even when sandpaper people are needy!
- V. LOVE MORE – even when sandpaper people hate you! READ Matthew 5:43-48
- A. Even the best of Christians are going to have some enemies.
 - 1. Jesus said, “Beware when all men speak well of you.”
 - 2. Gal. 5:11 says that the gospel is going to offend some people.
 - 3. But not all of our enemies are because of the gospel
 - a. Some people are just mean, nasty, and hateful. – Not much you can do about it but be a good servant of Christ and to pray for them.
 - b. Some times, however, you messed up and you have enemies because of it.
 - c. If they refuse to forgive, you can't do anything about it, except find your forgiveness in Christ.
 - B. No matter the reason we have enemies, Jesus said to treat them with compassion, grace, and mercy.
 - 1. Your instinct tells you to lash out and do to others before they do it to you.
 - 2. But you are to be different
 - a. Romans 12:20-21 – *If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*
 - C. Jesus wants you to love and not hate.
 - 1. Hate is such powerful thing. It destroys your life both inside and out.
 - 2. God calls us to hate evil. We should hate sin. I personally hate sickness and pain. It is not wrong to hate those things.

3. But we must never hate people.
 - a. We must never hate those who are evil or those who are committing sins. WE must love the sinner, even while we hate sin!
 - b. I realize it's sometimes a difficult distinction to make but Jesus commands us to love.
 - c. Loving an enemy means choosing to let our love OVERRIDE our feelings of disgust.
- D. Why does Jesus want us to love, even our enemies?
 1. Love makes us perfect. In your bulletins is your memory verse. This is one of the hardest things Jesus has ever said. How in the world can we be perfect?
 2. When Jesus for us to be perfect, He was saying two things:
 - a. We have a goal – to be perfect in our love.
 - a. That word "perfect" there causes us a lot of problems because we think of something "perfect" as being without any flaw or blemish.
 - i. No matter how hard we try, we know that there are going to have flaws & blemishes in our life.
 - ii. To be perfect means to be "mature, fully equipped, ready & able to do the job that needs to be done."
 - b. I believe that that is what Jesus expects from us in putting into practice God's love in this world.
 - b. We have a God – who is perfect in love.
 - a. When you show mercy and grace, you'll remind people of your Father in heaven.

This is why over and over again, I believe that Jesus is telling us to love more in today's Scripture:

Jesus says:

1. LOVE MORE – even when sandpaper people humiliate us!
2. LOVE MORE – even when sandpaper people want to sue us!
3. LOVE MORE – even when sandpaper people make unreasonable demands!
4. LOVE MORE – even when sandpaper people are needy!
5. LOVE MORE – even when sandpaper people hate you!

When it comes down to it: we should treat sandpaper people like God treats us.

How did God treat us when we were sandpaper to Him?

Romans 5:8 – *God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

While we were sinners!

- A. Jesus Himself is the perfect example for us to follow.
1. He was arrested, given an unfair trial, roughed up, and insulted by the government of His day.
 2. The authorities spat on Him, blindfolded Him, and slapped Him in the face.
 3. Then the Roman soldiers mocked Him by crowning Him with thorns and putting a purple robe on Him, and a weak reed in His hand as a make-believe scepter.
 4. They jeered at Him, "Hail King of the Jews!" Then they scourged Him.
- B. Jesus had the power to strike them blind, to paralyze their hand, to choke them on their own spittle, to condemn them to hell. BUT, with the divine dignity, He loved them more.
- a. 1 Peter 2:23 (NLT) – *He did not retaliate when he was insulted. When he suffered, he did not threaten to get even. He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly.*

Even on the cross, while hanging there dying, because of what they did to Him, Jesus prayed, "Father forgive them." If anyone had the right to lash out against sandpaper people, it was Jesus! He didn't return evil for evil, but He silently turned the other cheek.

Do you know why? He knew that we were incapable of love! As sandpaper, we could only rub God the wrong way. He overcame our own disturbing harshness and gave His life to change us. We went from sandpaper to smooth silk, all because of His sacrifice. He did it all for you!

Jesus wants you to follow in His steps.

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Benediction:

May the blessings of God
 Flow like a river within you,
 Dance like sunlight around you,
 Flame like the stars above you and
 Forever lead you on your way.