

If we have died to self, how should that affect how we interact with other people?

Matthew 5:38-42 (NIV)

"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' ³⁹ But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.

⁴⁰ And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.

⁴¹ If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.

⁴² Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

What was God's intention when he told the Israelites "eye for an eye?"

Exodus 21:23-25 (NIV)

But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, ²⁴ eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, ²⁵ burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.

God was setting parameters on how far someone could go in getting justice.

Lamech was an example of taking things too far:

Genesis 4:23-24 (NIV)

Lamech said to his wives, "Adah and Zillah, listen to me; wives of Lamech, hear my words. I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for injuring me. ²⁴ If Cain is avenged seven times, then Lamech seventy-seven times."

Lamech's version of justice was perfect revenge. If a man wounds you, you kill him.

In the Law, God was restraining how far someone could go in exercising justice. You could never go further than the injury someone gave you.

Have there been times when you've been tempted to get revenge? Did you give in or show restraint?

Is Jesus contradicting what was written in Exodus 21?

By saying, "You have heard that it was said..." Jesus is informing his listeners that the way that this scripture was used was not the way that it was intended. Instead of being the maximum punishment one could exert and a restraint of evil, the religious leaders were stressing that an eye for an eye was what should always be practised in every situation. They pushed for the maximum sentence whenever they could.

Jesus is declaring that the maximum punishment should not be sought after, but rather grace and a willingness to love in the face of adversity.

Why would Jesus say these things? Isn't there a danger of the person being taken advantage of?

Have there been times when turning the other cheek turned out not to be the best solution?

Is Jesus saying we should give in to every oppressor?

Jesus was not a walking mat for anyone who wanted to trample him. However, he did deny "self" whenever there was an opportunity to build up others and bring them to a closer walk with God. If Jesus fought for justice for himself, he never would have gone to the cross.

It was not justified that Jesus should die, nor was it fair that he should be treated in such a way. Jesus put his love for us, his enemies, above his own need to be treated justly and, as a result, we can now be rescued by him.

Being a walking mat implies we're a victim. Jesus' response actually raises us above the role of victim to one who is free to make choices and proactively love others. We make choices, not because we are forced to, but because we choose to. We know that all our needs will be met by Christ, so that we do not have to struggle or fight for anything. **Jesus' teaching moves us from a position of victim to over-comer.** We are free; as a result we can go beyond what others expect.

Were there times when Jesus did not turn the other cheek?

There were plenty of times when Jesus was very harsh with the Pharisees and often turned the tables on them. It was not beneficial for the kingdom of God or for the Pharisees at those moments, for Jesus to let himself be taken advantage of.

What is Jesus raising as a priority in each of the Matthew 5 verses?

Jesus desires that we be more concerned about loving others than we are about getting justice for ourselves. Our lives will be taken care of by God. If we have died to self, then there is nothing we need to fight for for ourselves. Every issue we face regarding justice becomes God's concern, not ours. Because we have died to self, instead of fighting for what we deserve, we are free to fight for the unconditional love of others.

The early church struggled with dying to self:**1 Corinthians 6:1-7 (NIV)**

If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints? ² Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? ³ Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! ⁴ Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church! ⁵ I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? ⁶ But instead, one brother goes to law against another--and this in front of unbelievers!

⁷ The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?

What is the main point Paul is trying to communicate?

Paul is saying that when believers prioritize justice for self, over their relationship with other believers, they are already completely defeated by Satan's deception. Lawsuits among believers reveal that they have no concept about the grace of God and the priority of unity within the family over "rights".

Does that mean we should just always give up and never work things through?

No, the point in this passage is that we "do" work them through, but within the family of God, along with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. To have to go to a secular court to solve disputes within the body of Christ suggests that the Holy Spirit is not present to give his people wisdom and guidance. It makes a mockery of the church and works against God's purposes to redeem the world. For Christians to place their own personal rights ahead of the glory of God's name reveals spiritual immaturity and a complete departure from the values God would have us live by.

Ephesians 1:13-14 (NIV)

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession--to the praise of his glory.

How might this scripture free us to not worry about having our needs or expectations met?

If our future reward is already taken care of and guaranteed, then we don't need to focus at all on having things go our way. We are free to focus on helping others find their reward in Jesus Christ. If we have to put up with being wronged along the way, we have still lost nothing, but might possibly gain the salvation of another person. Because Jesus knew who he was and what was waiting for him in heaven, he did not have to strive after anything. When other people didn't live the way they should, it did not change his joy, his freedom, or his response to them. He was free to respond in whatever way was most appropriate.

SPIRIT-FILLED SUBMISSION***Ephesians 5:18,21 (NIV)***

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.

²¹[Submitting] to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Wives submitting to husbands	Eph 5:22
Husbands submitting to wives	Eph 5:25
Children submitting to parents	Eph 6:1
Parents submitting to children	Eph 6:4
Slaves submitting to masters	Eph 6:5
Masters submitting to slaves	Eph 6:9

Why do you think submitting to one another is an outflow of the Spirit-filled life?

Submission is about loving others and doing what is best for them. That describes precisely the very work God wants to accomplish through us. The second greatest command is to love your neighbour and that can only be done through an attitude of submission.

Also, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ. Whatever Christ did on earth, is the very thing his Spirit wants to continue to do through us. Jesus lived the Spirit-filled life which he demonstrated by constantly setting his preferences aside out of a desire to serve others.

Why do we find submission to others so difficult?**Jesus' Example of Submission*****John 13:3-15 (NIV)***

Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; ⁴ so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. ⁵ After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

⁶ He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

⁷ Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

⁸ "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

⁹ "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

¹⁰ Jesus answered, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." ¹¹ For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

¹² When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. ¹³ "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. ¹⁴ Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

Why did Peter struggle with the idea of Jesus washing his feet?

Peter was still operating on the principle that those who are great, should be served. Since Jesus was “above” them in position, it was very inappropriate (in Peter’s mind) that Jesus should serve him in such a way. It also reflected that, at some point in time, Peter would expect that he would be in a position for others “under” him would “serve” him.

Why did Jesus wash his disciples’ feet?

Jesus was communicating that his kingdom worked precisely opposite of Satan’s kingdom. Satan’s kingdom says that you need to keep rising to a position where others serve you. Jesus was teaching that in his kingdom you keep rising to the point where you serve others. The greatest in the kingdom of God is the greatest servant. It is the person who sets aside their agendas, their preferences, their expectations, their needs, their desires for the building up of others in Christ Jesus.

How can we translate the principle of feet washing into today’s culture?

Why is it sometimes easier to serve someone else as opposed to letting someone else serve you?
What sinful barriers must we allow the Holy Spirit to break down in our lives so we can allow ourselves to serve and be served?

PRIDE

What would our church be like if it were filled with non-complaining, servant-hearted feet-washers?

Do you find it is easy to slip back into a perspective of an “others should serve me” mentality?
How can we prevent that from happening?

How can we cultivate this attitude more deeply within our church?**How can we personally commit this week to being a feet-washer?**



Feet washing time:

Have two basins of water and two towels.

Have the men and women separate into two groups and then take turns washing each other's feet.

What was your experience in this process?

In what ways did it feel awkward?

In what ways did it help you identify with Jesus?

Close in group prayer.