 **Flip The Script 1.5 -- Taking the Initiative in Grace-full Living (week of 8/2/2015)**

**Text: Luke 6:27-36**

**Big Idea: Cultivate an attitude of pro-active grace.**

**Ice Breaker:** Thinking back to school (from kindergarten through high school), who was your favorite teacher, and why?

“Aaah, sweet revenge!” “Revenge is a dish best served cold.” “Do unto others as they do unto you.” Our world has a good number of ways to express the idea of getting back at someone who has hurt us, wronged us, insulted us, ignored us, etc. The news has, at times, been crowded with stories of violent reprisal for even the most seemingly insignificant and unintended insults that have been blown up into something much bigger: “He looked at me wrong.” “She shouldn’t have said that.”

It seems that our culture has embedded into our minds the idea that no one should ever get away with anything that we find personally offensive, insulting, or rude. Even in churches, we find relationships destroyed by an unwillingness to let other people make mistakes or errors in judgment when we think it affects us. Maybe one good reason to pray that we never undergo actual persecution in the church is that we handle even inadvertent hurts from our brothers and sisters so poorly!

Jesus calls us to “flip the script” of how we react to insults, injury, and being taken advantage of. He puts it in terms of interaction with “enemies”, with situations that are generally more aggressive and harmful than what we most often react to ourselves. But if we can allow the Holy Spirit to flip the script in our hearts so that we’re ready to offer a “grace-full” response about such BIG things, perhaps we’ll learn to be more grace-full to our brothers and sisters in the smaller issues of fellowship in faith.

**(1) BE READY TO RESPOND IN JESUS’ WAY TO POOR TREATMENT FROM “ENEMIES”**

*Luke 6:27-30 "But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, (28) bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. (29) If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. (30) Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back.*

The Jews of Jesus’ day would only think of fellow Jews as their neighbors, but, like in the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus strongly says that there is NO one who we are excused from loving. We don’t love every individual in the same way: some we love romantically, some as family or close friends. But Jesus calls us to love even people who mistreat or abuse us. As Pete said in the movie *O Brother, Where Art Thou*, “THAT don’t make NO sense!” But there’s no way to get around it -- that’s exactly what Jesus tells us to do. He doesn’t qualify it, or set boundaries on it, or give us any “But what if…” about it. He plainly says, “Do it.”

**Q: Think about the first two phrases about revenge in the introduction. Explain what they both mean.**

**Q: How does what Jesus says here flip the script of what our culture teaches us?**

**Q:** Read verses 27-28, and think about who your “enemy” is. **What kinds of people do you tend to put into that category in your life?**

**Q:** In verses 27-28, Jesus teaches us to love our enemies with our words, actions and prayers. **Which of these three is the most difficult for you? Why?**

**Q:** Jesus’ words in verses 29-30 are very direct instruction. [LEADER, SEE THE NOTES BELOW ABOUT THESE VERSES]

**(a) To what degree did Jesus mean for us to apply them literally, in real life situations?**

**(b) If you DON’T think he meant that, then what WAS is his point?**

**Q: Does loving our enemies and responding gracefully to mistreatment mean that Christians should allow ourselves to be “treated like doormats”? Explain your answer.**

**(2) TAKE THE INITIATIVE IN “GRACE-FULL” LIVING**

*Luke 6:31-36 Do to others as you would have them do to you. (32) "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. (33) And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. (34) And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. (35) But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. (36) Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.*

In the first section, Jesus tells us how to REACT to mistreatment. But now he flips the script more strongly. By telling us to become PRO-ACTIVE in our grace-fullness. He tells us to not wait for mistreatment to happen before we respond, but to reach out FIRST, to put our minds and our actions in the right place ahead of time.

In any sports setting, far more time is spent in practice than in formal contest. You run plays, improve skills, and prepare reactions hundreds or thousands of times BEFORE the game or match. Why? So that IN the game, you don’t have to take time to decide what to do. When the play is live, and happening now, you HAVE to be able to respond well without having to stop and think about it. You have to be PRO-active in your preparation for the real thing that’s coming. THAT’S WHAT JESUS TELLS US TO DO IN THESE VERSES.

**Q:** Three times, about three different actions, Jesus asks, “What credit is that to you?” **Did he mean that you shouldn’t do these things? Explain.**

**Q: In verse 35, which of Jesus’ commands do you think goes most against human nature?**

**Q: In the personal relationships of a Christian, what place does the phrase, “what goes around, comes around” properly have?**

**Q: How does knowing that God is your father and that you are his child help you to live out these verses?**

**Q:** More than a few Christian teachers hold that God reserves his blessings only for those who follow him.

**(a) How do the last phrase of verse 35, and verse 36, answer that idea?**

**(b) What motivation do you (or SHOULD you) gain from that last verse-and-a-half, to be more pro-active in being grace-full to possible enemies?**

**Q: Share the story of one time when God enabled you to follow what Jesus says in these verses. What resulted from your obedience?**

**NEXT STEPS:**

**Ask God to forgive you of times when, in pride, you lashed out or in other ways sought to retaliate. Ask Him to replace bitterness with His love, so that you can be pro-active in grace-fullness.**

***FURTHER STUDY NOTES***

**[Rich Cathers]**  *(29) If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them.* Put down your fists. Even though I think there are limits to how this applies, for many of us the lesson is very clear -- don’t fight back.

It’s not easy to not fight back, isn’t it? I don’t think it’s wrong to defend yourself at times. But there are going to be times when you need to step back and not defend yourself. Sometimes God wants us to just let it go.

When the people in the Corinthian church were mad at each other and suing other believers in the secular courts. Paul considered this behavior before the unbelieving judges to be an embarrassment. Paul wrote them, *(1 Corinthians 6:7) 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?*

There’s a Greek word in the New Testament, *praus*. In secular Greek writing, this word is used to describe a powerful, wild horse that is tamed and controlled by its master. Our English Bibles translate this word as “gentle” or “meek. It’s not a word to describe a “wimp”, but a word used to describe a person who has their strength under control. They are able to control their response to situations. Sometimes choosing not to fight back is a sign of strength, of control, not of weakness.

Jesus’ teaching can be kind of dangerous, huh? Loving your enemies. Responding with good deeds. Praying a blessing. Putting down your fists.

*(30) Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back.* Again, I don’t want to sound like I’m trying to make excuses for not obeying Jesus, but there is a balance to this. For some of us, we read verses like this and empty our pockets whenever someone asks us for money.

The balance is that the Bible says, (*2 Thessalonians 3:10-12) For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat." (11) We hear that some among you are idle and disruptive. They are not busy; they are busybodies. (12) Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the food they eat.*

We’ve learned the hard way that sometimes people are going to continually take advantage of you because you are “the Christian”. I think we need wisdom and discernment to say “no” when we know that it’s not right to help this person. When someone is making their living off of taking advantage of others, we should take a stand to tell them they need to work like everyone else.

**[Ron Daniel]** You've probably seen in the movies when someone takes off their glove and slaps another person in the face with it. Culturally, the slap on the cheek was an assault not on your body, but on your character and your honor. Jesus is not saying, "When someone hits you with a baseball bat, don't defend yourself." In fact, He told the disciples on the night of His betrayal: (*Luke 22:36) "...Let him who has no sword sell his robe and buy one."*

He's not saying that you can't defend your body physically. He's saying don't defend your reputation emphatically, don't defend your honor emotionally, don't defend your rights with hostility.

Then Jesus makes an even harder statement: (*Luke 6:29-30) "...And whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either. Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back."*

The Christian's first reaction to this is, "You've got to be kidding!" G. Campbell Morgan said of these difficult verses: "We say 'these are counsels of perfection. Such action is not practicable'. The only reply is that these were the words of our Lord to His own, and any criticism of them must be referred to Him!" In other words, if you've got a problem with what this says, don't complain to me... talk to Him.

But again, this is not Jesus demanding of us the impossible, He is instructing us to do what is merciful. Jesus is telling us that we must have a love for people that ignores our own rights, a love which knows no limits of self-sacrifice or discomfort. A love of unselfish generosity.