

REFUSE TO PLAY THE GAME
The Power Zone VII
Matthew 5:38-48

I. THE GAME.

- A. Retaliation. We call “getting even.”
 - 1. Object of game, be at least one point ahead of enemies.
 - 2. Burning passion for getting even.
- B. This push and shove game “does us in” long before affecting our enemy.
 - 1. Bitterness erodes our spirit, spoils appetites, disturbs sleep, ruins health.
 - 2. Holding grudges wrinkles faces, stoops shoulders, burns ulcers into stomachs and frowns on lips.

II. THE SUPERNATURAL LIFESTYLE.

- A. Jesus’ Cure, Mt. 5:38-48.
 - 1. *“Here’s another old saying that deserves a second look: ‘Eye for eye, tooth for tooth.’ Is that going to get us anywhere? Here’s what I propose: ‘Don’t hit back at all.’ If someone strikes you, stand there and take it. If someone drags you into court and sues for the shirt off your back, giftwrap your best coat and make a present of it. And if someone takes unfair advantage of you, use the occasion to practice the servant life. No more tit-for-tat stuff. Live generously.”*
“You’re familiar with the old written law, ‘Love your friend,’ and its unwritten companion, ‘Hate your enemy.’ I’m challenging that. I’m telling you to love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst. When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the energies of prayer, for then you are working out of your true selves, your God-created selves. This is what God does. He gives His best – the sun to warm and the rain to nourish – to everyone, regardless: the good and bad, the nice and nasty. If all you do is love the lovable, do you expect a bonus? Anybody can do that. If you simply say hello to those who greet you, do you expect a medal? Any run-of-the-mill sinner does that.”
“In a word, what I’m saying is Grow up. You’re kingdom subjects. Now live like it. Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you” (Mt. 5:38-48, The Message).
 - 2. The push to get even literally obsesses us.
 - a. It consumes our thoughts.
 - b. We want to see our enemy hurt as badly as he hurt us.
 - c. Our work suffers and our relationships take a back seat to the all-consuming desire to get even.
- B. Eight Suggestions from Jesus:
 - 1. Treat others better than they deserve, Mt. 5:45.
 - a. God causes the sun to rise on the good AND the bad.
 - b. God sends rain on the righteous AND the unrighteous.
 - c. Should our lives not reflect the same?
 - 2. Go “one down” with opponents, Phil. 2:3-11.
 - a. Putting others first.
 - b. Based on the Lord’s humility – others first.

3. Live a proactive life, Rom. 12:21.
 - a. Learning to overcome evil with good.
 - b. Sixth grade experience with bully in school (Mom).
4. Treat others the way God treats you, Mt. 5:48.
 - a. Remind ourselves of the great love God has for each of us.
 - b. He loves all mankind, Jn. 3:16.
5. Put your heart into your work, Mt. 6:21.
 - a. Remember what we are striving for.
 - b. Christ died for all, 2 Cor. 5:14-16.
 - c. Remind ourselves where our “treasure” is.
6. Pray for your enemies, Mt. 5:44.
 - a. Different perspective: pray for your enemies (by name).
 - b. Hard to retaliate when we have them in prayer.
7. Accept God’s love, 1 Pet. 3:8-9; Col. 3:12-15.
 - a. Is it possible that our problems with others stem from acceptance of God’s love for us?
 - b. Can God truly love me, a sinner?
8. Use the Holy Spirit as your power source, Gal. 5:22-23.
 - a. 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19 – Indwelling of H.S.
 - b. We are not fighting this battle alone.

CLOSING

- A. Power of Choice.
 1. The power is not in the person who is the bully.
 2. Real power is “power under control.”
 - a. Jesus had this power on the cross.
 - b. The choice of non-retaliation.
 3. *“But in these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us,”*
Rom. 8:37.