



In Matthew 5:38–48, Jesus challenges the natural human instinct to retaliate, keep score, and love only those who love us. Instead, He calls His followers to respond differently; to refuse retaliation, love unexpected people, pray for those who oppose us, and increasingly reflect the character of our heavenly Father. This kind of love is not weakness; it is a deliberate choice to break the cycle of anger, revenge, and relational damage. Jesus invites us to “flip the script” by responding to hostility with grace, generosity, mercy, and love. As we study this passage together, consider where God may be inviting you to respond differently in a difficult relationship.

1. The sermon began with an exaggerated picture of revenge and retaliation. Where do you see the same cycle of “you hurt me, so I hurt you” playing out in everyday culture or relationships? Why is retaliation such a natural response for us?
2. Read **Matthew 5:38–42** and **Leviticus 24:17–22**. The Old Testament principle of “eye for eye” was intended to limit retaliation rather than encourage revenge. How does understanding that background change the way you hear Jesus’ words?
3. Read **Romans 12:17–21**. Paul says, “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” What does it look like practically to break the cycle of retaliation without ignoring wrongdoing or pretending that hurt does not matter?
4. Read **Matthew 5:43–47** and **Luke 6:27–36**. Jesus commands His followers to love their enemies and pray for those who mistreat them. Why do you think prayer is such an important part of loving someone who is difficult to love?
5. Jesus points out that almost everyone loves people who love them back. What kinds of people are easiest for you to love? What kinds of people are more difficult? What might “unexpected love” look like toward someone in that second category?
6. Read **Matthew 5:45–48** and **Ephesians 5:1–2**. Jesus points to the Father's generosity toward both the righteous and unrighteous. What does it mean for followers of Jesus to increasingly reflect the character of their heavenly Father?
7. Read **Matthew 5:5, 7, and 9, 22:37–40**, and **John 13:34–35**. How do Jesus’ teachings about being meek, merciful, and a peacemaker connect with His teaching here about retaliation and loving enemies? Which of these Beatitudes feels most challenging for you right now?
8. Close your time praying for strength to flip the script and love others.