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“Jesus’ Standard for Relating to Others”

Matthew 5:33-48

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The standard that Jesus set concerning how we relate to others is very different from the world’s standard. Jesus taught things like keep the promises you make; *“turn the other cheek”* when someone insults you; and love those who mistreat or malign you. The world’s approach is completely opposite. As Christians we must follow Jesus’ example even when the rest of the world lives and acts differently. Jesus is not calling us to be pacifists or to roll over and let people take advantage of us. He is calling us to take the higher road, to honor him, and to let God deal with those who mistreat and malign us.

Keep Your Word

1. **Matthew 5:33-37** – *“Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.’ But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.”*
2. Pastor Gary said, “The followers of Jesus are supposed to be people of [their] word. God wants us to be as reliable with our speech as he is. ... God’s promises are reliable... because his character is true. What he calls us to when he calls us to be people of our word is to be people of our character. [To] be a man or woman of your word is really an indication of your character. ... There should be enough strength in our character that we don’t need to add additional words to try to bolster our [statements]. ... [Jesus was speaking about people who didn’t have a strong character, who] were making statements [and] swearing by [the Temple, God, and other things]. Jesus [wants us to know] that if our character is right, then people should be able to accept ‘Yes’ to mean ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ to mean ‘No.’ ”

3. Don't Speak Rashly

- a. Pastor Gary said, "Sometimes we fail to keep our word because we speak rashly before we have really thought it all the way through. [We sometimes] overestimate our ability to deliver on a promise, and we underestimate what it will take to make good on our word. ... [It may be] that we have a personality that tends to speak first and think later, [like the apostle Peter].
 - i. **Mark 14:27-31** - *"Then Jesus said to them, 'All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: "I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered." 'But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.'* Peter said to Him, 'Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be.' Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you that today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.' But he spoke more vehemently, 'If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!' And they all said likewise."
 - ii. **Ecclesiastes 5:2** - *"Do not be rash with your mouth, and let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you are on earth; therefore let your words be few."*

4. Weigh Words Carefully

- a. We should be careful to avoid exaggeration and superlatives like always, never, and absolutely.
- b. The old saying is best: underpromise and overdeliver.
- c. **Proverbs 13:3** - *"He who guards his mouth preserves his life, but he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction."*
- d. Popular quotes ¹
 - i. "It's better to keep your mouth shut and appear stupid than open it and remove all doubt."
 - ii. "Better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak and to remove all doubt."
- e. **Proverbs 17:27-28** - *"He who has knowledge spares his words, and a man of understanding is of a calm spirit. Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; when he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive."*

5. Avoid Unrealistic Promises

- a. Pastor Gary said, "[It's] dangerous to make promises when they are dependent on circumstances that are beyond our control."
- b. **Ecclesiastes 5:5** - *"Better not to vow than to vow and not pay."*
- c. **James 4:13-16** - *"Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit.' Whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away."*

¹ <https://quoteinvestigator.com/2010/05/17/remain-silent/>

Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.' But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil."

Turn Your Cheek

6. **Matthew 5:38-42** - *"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away."*
- a. Pastor Gary said, "[Jesus was not] saying, 'Roll over and let people mistreat you.' ... [Jesus] was saying that we need to take the steps necessary to make sure that we don't try to get even, and that we go the extra mile to make sure that bitterness doesn't set in our hearts as it relates to the way people might treat us."
 - b. In the Mosaic Law this statement was intended for civil government to make any punishment consistent with a specific crime.
 - c. **Exodus 21:24-25** - *"... eye for an eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe."*
 - d. Pastor Gary said, "Over time, religious leaders hijacked [this and made it personal] in relation to how people treat or mistreat you. ... [the idea being that it's okay to] get revenge. ... Jesus was not saying that a personal attack cannot be resisted or defended against. ... When Jesus [spoke] of a slap on [a person's] right cheek, it was culturally understood in [that] day to refer to a deep insult, not a physical attack. ... [Jesus was speaking about a backhand not, for example, a right fist to the left side of a person's face.] ... [We know this as an idiom as in the insult given when someone gives a backhanded compliment.] ... [Jesus] was saying that if someone deeply insults you, [turn the other cheek]. ... [Jesus was saying that we need to] endure the insult and let God defend you and don't retaliate. [Jesus wasn't talking about being punched.] ... Jesus didn't tolerate [anything when things] were done in an evil way. As it relates to the way he was personally insulted, think about how he responded to insults. In the Bible [we read that Jesus] was insulted on various occasions: when he was called a glutton, [a drunk, an illegitimate child, a blasphemer, a mad man, and many other different examples]. And Jesus, he just allowed the insults to be spoken and he didn't retaliate."
 - i. **1 Peter 2:23** - *"... when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously."*
 - e. Pastor Gary said, "[In the Mosaic Law] the outer cloak couldn't be taken from you legally. ... [A person would basically be 'killing them with kindness' by

giving the one who sued you your cloak.] ... This is a principle. The idea of the principle is to keep our hearts from retaliation and bitterness. Jesus was saying in effect, 'I would rather you lose all your property than to suffer the effects of vengeance and retaliation.' [Jesus was saying] that it is better to be empty of possessions than be full of bitterness."

- f. Pastor Gary said, "[In Jesus day the Jews were under the control of the Romans, and] under Roman law a Roman soldier could tap a Jew on the shoulder... and demand that [the Jewish person] carry his supplies for [one] mile. ... Under the law [the soldier] could not require that [his supplies be] carried for more than one mile. ... When you are doing such a thing [going the extra mile] in this way, you are doing something out of love rather than out of spite, and you are preventing resentment from getting the upper hand in your heart."
- g. Jesus wants us to be better than and above the intuitive ways of the world as a way of honoring him.
- h. Jesus wants us to do things that may not be popular as a way of honoring him.

Love Your Enemies

7. **Matthew 5:43-48** - *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."* (Emphasis added)

- a. Jesus referred to a common saying about loving and hating, but his point was that Scripture said nothing about hating enemies.
 - i. **Leviticus 19:18** - *"You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD."*
- b. Religious leaders misapplied Scripture by assuming that if people were supposed to love their neighbor or the person they get along with, then it was okay for people to hate their enemies.
- c. The word Jesus used for love is the Greek word agapao, which speaks of the most supreme kind of love.²
- d. Pastor Gary said, "[This is the kind of love] that we can only know and experience and offer when we have a relationship with Jesus because that's

² <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=G25&t=NIV>

where this kind of love comes from. [When Jesus tells us] to love people who malign and mistreat us, he is calling us to this highest kind of love. [In] order to love someone who mistreats you or maligns you in some way, it will require a love that will not come from yourself. This is a love that can only come from a relationship with Jesus. [When] you experience this kind of love from God toward you, you will then be able to express this love of God toward others. ... The idea of loving our enemy is not loving what he or she does against us. The idea is that of loving his or her soul. ... Before you became a Christian, you were an enemy of God. ... All of us before coming to know Christ... were opposed to God, and yet, God loved our souls enough to send his son Jesus to die on a cross. So, while we were still enemies toward God, he still loved us [and] loved our souls. He didn't love what we did, [our behavior, or our actions]. But he loved our souls. That's the kind of love he calls us to [show toward others]."

- e. Bless Your Enemies
 - i. The Greek word for bless is eulogeo, which means to speak well of someone. ³
 - ii. The Lord doesn't want Christians to gossip about, slander, or speak evil of others.
- f. Do Good To Your Enemies
 - i. The Lord doesn't want Christians to mistreat others.
 - ii. **Romans 12:17-18** - *"Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men."*
- g. Pray For Your Enemies
 - i. The Lord wants us to pray for our enemies in such a way that we release them to God.
 - ii. God's grace is poured out on all people, and we need to act in the same way.
 - 1. **Matthew 5:45** - *"... He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."*
 - iii. The Lord calls Christians to love and honor people who aren't all that lovely or honorable.
- h. **Matthew 5:48** - *"Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."*
 - i. The Greek word for perfect is teleios, which means complete, whole, or mature. ⁴
 - ii. The Lord is calling Christians to be complete, whole, and mature in the Lord.

³ <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=G2127&t=NKJV>

⁴ <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=G5046&t=NKJV>

Discussion Questions

1. Read [Matthew 5:33–48](#) to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about the importance of being a person of your word. (See #1 and #2 above)
3. Pastor Gary shared a three-point outline (#3 through #5). Allow the people in your group to share specific examples about times when they spoke rashly, didn't weight their words carefully, and made unrealistic promises.
 - a. Read and discuss [Mark 14:27–31](#) and [Ecclesiastes 5:2](#). (See #3 above)
 - b. Read and discuss [Proverbs 13:3](#) and [Proverbs 17:27–28](#). (See #4 above)
 - c. Read and discuss [Ecclesiastes 5:5](#) and [James 4:13–16](#). (See #5 above)
4. How is the Holy Spirit making you more Christ-like concerning being a person of your word?
5. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's remarks about the real meaning "*turn the other cheek.*" (See #6a, #6d, and #6e above)
6. What are some of the characteristics of the person who lives by the secular understanding of "*an eye for an eye...*"?
7. How is the Holy Spirit making you more Christ-like concerning being a person who doesn't retaliate, and being a person who let's God handle things his way and in his timing?
8. Pastor Gary emphasized Jesus' comments in [Matthew 5](#). (See bold font #7 above)
9. Share examples about times when you've allowed the Holy Spirit to lead you to model Jesus' instructions.
10. Read and discuss [Leviticus 19:18](#). (See #7a above)
11. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about (See #7d above)
12. Read and discuss [Romans 12:17–18](#). (See #7f above)
13. Spend time talking about the practical ways a Christian can pray for, do good to, and bless their enemies. (See #7e, #7f, and #7g above)
14. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James Version (NKJV)