



Discussion Group Questions

Matthew 5:38-48 (Message):

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, giftware your best coat and make a present of it. And if someone takes unfair advantage of you, use the occasion to practice 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 the bad, the nice and the 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.

1. When you feel threatened by a request from someone who wants to borrow something you don't want to give, or who asks you to do something you don't want to do, can

you think of a time when you have refused, standing on your rights or your hard-earned possessions or your right to behave in a certain way?

Can you think of a time when you willingly gave up something that you didn't want to or did something you didn't want to do for the sake of someone else?

What was the difference?

2. What is our natural tendency when someone gives us a hard time? What is our usual response if someone is in our face, yelling or disagreeing or even posting something that we don't like on Facebook?

When we pray for someone who doesn't think/talk/act/believe exactly the way we do, does it change them or does it change us? Can you think of a time when it changed someone else? How about a time when it changed you?

3. Read Jonah 3:1 - 4:5

Did Jonah jump to negative conclusions about the Ninevites?

Why did he assume they wouldn't listen, there would be no shared understanding or that God wouldn't act?

Is it easier to assume or to understand?

Are we more incline to assume and jump to conclusions or to take the time to get to know and understand other people?

Why?

4. What's the difference between being "color blind" in your dealings with others and actually caring about the experiences or perspective of someone whose skin isn't the same color as yours?

Pray together.