



Haters Gonna Hate

Devotional Thoughts for the Week of
October 11, 2020
by Phil Corbell

This is week 6 of our series on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount called "Living Right-side Up in and Upside-down World." Our focus this week is on Matthew 5:38-48. Our devotional author this week is Phil Corbell.

Week 6: Day 1



"You did what? You need to apologize to your sister right now!" Chances are, you have met, or maybe even been this exasperated parent. I have felt everything from appalled to

defeated as I am summoned to "the bench" to hold court over my children's disputes. The obligatory "I'm sorry" is eventually issued, but we ALL know that in this moment, it is not **what** is said, but **how** it is said that makes *all the difference*. Posture, tone, timing, inflection, volume, and tenor all matter, and we all instinctively know the difference between saying "sorry" and meaning "sorry." Do you ever think about why that difference is so important?

I think this "motivation" issue is exactly what Jesus is trying to address in Matthew 5:38-48. The culture then (and now, perhaps) is one that proportionally "balances" cruelty with cruelty—everyone knows that the punishment must fit the crime. But Jesus is calling us into a different kingdom with less battle and more peace. There's beauty and LIFE to be had in living Jesus's way, but we'll have to "lower our shields" and "power down" our weapons in order to get there, and that's scary stuff. We're going to spend the week trying to

unpack this counter-cultural approach of speaking love, truth, and grace to power.

Help me Jesus, I pray, not to fight and win, but to respond to power with love, and to trade my fears for compassion. Amen.

Week 6: Day 2

As a child of the 80s, I can't think of a more familiar (and exhilarating) moment in my favorite shows and my playing with my friends than ... "Chuk-chuck." I don't know how to spell it, but every boy knows the sound of some type of gun getting cocked. I loved that moment—when the heroes cocked their guns, you knew that the "bad guys" were about to lose. Ah, the simplicity of 70s and 80s TV shows...

Unfortunately, that wasn't really all that helpful for my spiritual formation. Jesus' kingdom is not about "shields up, load the (photon) torpedoes," "Form Blazing Sword," flying the Batman symbol, or even flaming our enemies on social media. In God's economy, the goal isn't about being right, safe, or using power, fear, or shame to control others. It's about dismantling power with grace, truth, and love. Jesus wants us to see our attackers as wounded and deceived *family members* in need of our loving correction. But it's hard to say "lower the shields," right?



It was no easier for Jesus' crowd to practice Matthew 5:38-48 than it is for us to practice it today. This is hard, messy, stuff—full of "whatabouts" and legitimate, God-honoring concerns for safety and security. Love doesn't call us to lay down across the train tracks, but we must grow and develop our imagination for how to speak love, truth, grace, and meekness to power. The good news is that, according to Jesus, it is the real way to build His kingdom here.

Bonus round: It's okay to wrestle with it—it helps to name this stuff. Let's try this: Leave your favorite childhood/adult "power up" moment in the comments. No shaming allowed, or I will summon the "power of Grayskull" against you 😊 (just kidding...I'll just send Airwolf).

Week 6: Day 3

Back when I was in middle school, there was a (big) kid—let's call him "Eddie" that seemed to always need what other people had. A stick of gum, a pencil, your homework, or your food at the lunch table. The conventional (Jr. High) wisdom was not to give him anything (if possible), else you would be giving him everything (right?). I didn't have much, but most of the time there was something on my lunch plate that wound up on his.

I don't remember thinking about Matthew 5:40 back in those days, nor did know much about tunics and cloaks (our pew bibles were King James). But I think about Eddie a lot now, and folks like him, and I wonder how I could have "moved the needle" in Eddie's view of people and life. When I was a kid, all I used to think about was how I could get him to leave me alone. These days, having watched him on Facebook over the last decade, I feel like in spite of all the things he took, he never really got what he needed. I wonder if what Jesus is trying to say in Matt 5:40 would have gone something like this:

"Hey, I see you chewing gum, do you have any more?" Eddie asked. "Yes, I just started a new pack. Tell you what—you can have the whole pack." His face changes; "Why—what's wrong with them?" "Nothing, I just thought it might feel good to have a whole pack. Now you don't have to ask other people every time you want some, and maybe even share some with your friends."



Now, I'll never know how he would have responded to that; but if I'm hearing Jesus right, I think He wants me to create a kingdom

valued, counter-culture, head-scratching moment where Eddie could (maybe) see me as more than a source, and I could see him as more than a bully.

Week 6: Day 4

How do you fix a bad boss? Simple. Just kidding, it's not simple. At least, not in my experience. The Office, Dilbert, Simpsons, and many more shows attempt to make light of bad bosses, because let's be honest—bad bosses can make us miserable, right? Jesus's instruction to "go the extra mile" doesn't sound like good news if you are in an abusive relationship with a boss, spouse, friend, family member, or coworker; it can sound an awful lot like God is calling us to be a doormat, and signing us up for continual abuse.

That's a lot of bad news, and it's not true. Jesus is calling us to love, and love does not rejoice in abuse. If you are in an abusive relationship, please—get to a safe place, and get help. Period. Now, what IS the "extra mile" all about, if it's not just continually putting up with abusers?

If you haven't seen Patch Adams, I highly recommend it. It's based on a true story about a doctor that just wants to help people, and in the movie he tries to love on some pretty tough folks. In doing so, he experiences the whole range of human experiences that come from loving demanding and damaged people. Two things that I noticed in Patch's efforts to "go the extra mile." #1: He did it from a place of health & love—you can't give what you don't have. And #2: He fought passionately to create a special moment, and a unique bond, with everyone he met. He had to exceed expectations. See, the first mile is obligatory and routine; but the second mile is a surprise, a gift, and an adventure into the unknown, the place that memories and stories are made.



Lord I pray that when called into service, we spend our first mile secretly planning a magical second mile full of surprise, joy, grace, and good news. Amen.

Week 6: Day 5

I'm the younger brother, which means that every teacher I had in school had some pre-conceived notion of me before I ever set foot in the classroom. Your family definitely leaves an imprint on your character, and many a teacher can bear witness to this truth. Jesus was also well acquainted with this truth; He had big shoes to fill in representing his Dad well, and He passed on that expectation to us. In Matt 5:43-45, he said *"You have heard it said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: love your enemies! Pray for people who persecute you! That way, you'll be children of your father in heaven!"*

LIKE
FATHER
LIKE & SON

Have you ever heard someone say "like father, like son," or "the apple doesn't fall far from the tree"? Comparisons are tricky, but Jesus didn't shy away from them at the end of Chapter 5. First, he

reminds us of whose name we bear, and the implications of that (43). Then, he asked the crowd to compare themselves to the tax collectors and the Gentiles (46-47). So, in other words, a) you all need to be like God, and b), are you currently behaving just like the people you despise? Ouch! How is that good news?

When I was growing up, my dad gave me a plaque for my birthday. It's titled "To My Son." I did the same for my son, and today it's hanging in his room. It's a poem about the importance of guarding your name. Jesus is doing the same thing to us as my dad did with me, and as I did with my son—He's calling us to live out our family's values. One of the things that we are to be known for, as God's children, is to be a people who love their enemies. It's hard to imagine a way that God could have said this any louder than by

allowing his son to be crucified by his own people at Calvary. This is our plaque to carry, and this is what it says: God loves his enemies. Now watch his children as they demonstrate what this love looks like—He has taught them how, and He can teach you too.

Peace to you.