

Open Your Heart and Mind

- Last Sunday we celebrated all that God is doing at RMBC. What is one thing you can celebrate that God is doing in your life?

Finding God in His Word (Read Matthew 5:38-42)

- What are some of the immediate thoughts that come to your mind when you read this passage?
- Many would say this is a passage and teaching that is impossible to carry out in this life. Why do you think people would say that? Do you think carrying it out is impossible? Why? What makes Jesus' teaching here so difficult?
- Why do you think retaliation is something that needs to be controlled or bridled?
- Jesus begins citing the *lex talionis*. How would this kind of legislation serve a society? Why would it be dangerous to apply this legislation in personal grievances? Why would/is a court the most appropriate arbiter of this kind of law?
- In His characteristic style in this section, Jesus makes a radical statement – “do not resist the one who is evil”. Why do you think non-retaliation is to be the default response to “evil persons” for disciples and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ? How does this kind of response reflect the gospel and God's righteousness? Are there limits to non-retaliation?
- Jesus gives four examples of those who are evil persons (persons seeking to do harm because they can) that should not be resisted; the insulter, the legal oppressor, the military oppressor, and the unscrupulous person. Which of these offenders have you encountered in your life? How did you respond? How would you expand this list?
- Taking the illustrations as a whole, retaliation, escalation, and personal-protection are all the expected responses in that day. Have the expected responses to “evil persons” who make personal offenses changed much in our day?
- Jesus calls His disciples to respond with blessing, de-escalation, and an others focus. When you have responded to personal slights or oppressive behavior from others in the ways that Jesus gives, what have you seen in response to the other person.
- Read 1 Peter 2:20-25. How does Peter's description of Jesus set our example?
- The Bible repeatedly says that God is an avenger, the one who revenges (Leviticus 19:18, Deuteronomy 32:35, Psalm 94:1-2, Proverbs 20:22; 24:29, Romans 12:19, 1 Thessalonians 4:6, Hebrews 10:30) Why is it difficult to trust god to do this work and not take it into our own hands?

Live the Christ Life

1. Is there someone who is your “oppressor” or “insulter” that you need to entrust to God and respond to in grace?
2. Ask Jesus to give you the strength to not retaliate to offenses this week. Pray for strength to be a blessing to those who would seek your harm, and to return to them the gospel rather than a grievance.