

## SCRIPTURES FOR 4/29/07 LIFEGROUP LESSON

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### **Matthew 5:38-42**

38" You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' 39But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. 41If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. 42Give to the one

who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

### **Ephesians 6:12**

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

NOTE TO LEADER: There is a lot of material here. Familiarize yourself with it so you know which stuff you are most comfortable with and what you will cut if you get short on time. Try to keep the lesson/discussion 20-30 minutes in length. Good luck and let me know if you have any questions. - Ed

**NOTE TO LEADERS:** All items in *italics* are for your information and not designed to be read aloud.

**OPENING:**

ICEBREAKER or GET YA THINKIN' QUESTION: \_\_\_\_\_

OPENING PRAYER NOTES: \_\_\_\_\_

**INTRODUCTION:**

*(have someone read Matthew 5:38-42)* Jon really challenged our understanding of this passage this week.

**Q:** What had you always assumed these verses meant? How has that changed?

**APPLICATION:**

Jon talked about how first-century Jews were living in an occupied country.

**Q:** If we *were* invaded by another country, how would your life be different? Would you have thoughts of striking back?

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus suggested three new ways to respond to the Romans that were completely subversive:

**TURN THE OTHER CHEEK (v. 39) – SUBVERT THE CASTE SYSTEM**

Because the right hand is the “clean” hand (for eating, greeting, etc.), and the left hand is the “unclean” hand (for other less pleasant daily use), someone would only strike another with their right hand; therefore, if someone strikes you on the right cheek (v. 39), it must be backhanded – a sign of disrespect or superiority. If that person, rather than strike back, turns the other cheek, they are challenging that person’s perceived superiority, in effect exerting equality.

**Q:** Have you ever inadvertently or intentionally made someone feel “lower” than you? How did they respond?

**Q:** Has someone ever done that to you? How did it feel? How did you respond?

**GIVE THEM YOUR CLOAK (v. 40) – SUBVERTING SHAME**

Most of the Jews in occupied Israel were beholding to wealthy landowners and were deeply shamed, having lost centuries-old family property due to Roman taxation. If the shamed Jew could not meet his financial obligations, he could appeal to the landowner, using a garment (tunic, v. 40) as collateral, or the landowner could seize the garment pending payment. If the Jew offered his cloak also, this would leave the Jew naked, which at first would seem to exacerbate the situation, but in Jewish culture, the bulk of the shame fell not to the naked person, but the one observing him.

**Q:** What is an instance where outside forces, whether intentionally or not, could shame us today? (*food stamps at the store, credit card is rejected, refused employment due to past moral failure, etc.*)

**Q:** How could we, as Christians, subvert that shame? (*live right, do not become what they think you are, persevere in spite of shame*)

**GO TWO MILES (v. 41) – SUBVERTING POWER**

A Roman soldier was allowed to force another to carry his pack one mile, but any more than one would be considered cruel and grounds for punishment. So, the soldier could exert power over someone, but if that person continued to carry the pack after the first mile, they now have the power.

**Q:** Have you ever felt powerless? What was the situation? Were you able to turn that around?

While we are not living in an occupied country, this country *is* occupied by the “Prince of this world” (i.e., Satan – Ephesians 6:12).

**Q:** Do you think we can subvert Satan’s power in the same way? How?

Before the Sermon on the Mount, those present saw two ways to respond to their oppressors: be a doormat or retaliate. Jesus shared a third way. By responding in generosity (offer your cheek, your cloak, your back), you disarm your enemy and give him enough space to choose right; you give them an opportunity for a change of heart. Awesome.

**Q:** What are the possible outcomes (good or bad) of giving someone space to choose right? (*choose wrong, choose right, no change, changed life*)

**Q:** What would work better, leading someone into a change of heart or pushing someone into it? What’s the difference?

**CONCLUSION:**

I believe this is just one more reason Jesus came at the exact time He did. There are many lessons that are best gleaned from life in the first century and here were three.

**OTHER ACTIVITIES:**

GROUP NEEDS: \_\_\_\_\_ SHUT-IN MINISTRY: \_\_\_\_\_

WHO’S LEADING...

THIS WEEK: WORSHIP: \_\_\_\_\_ PRAYER: \_\_\_\_\_

NEXT WEEK: WORSHIP: \_\_\_\_\_ PRAYER: \_\_\_\_\_