

DON'T BE STUPID – DO BE CHRIST-LIKE

Matthew 5:42 (NKJV)

42 Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.

How should we understand this? Should we just be a “**soft touch**” that indiscriminately gives to everyone who wants something? I don’t think so. Paul said, “**If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.**” (2 Thess. 3:10). He didn’t say feed him anyway because of what Jesus taught.

Most commentators agree that this presumes the person asking for money or wanting to borrow has a legitimate need, you know that fact, and are in a position to help.

We must also take into account the many Proverbs in the book of Wisdom that counsel against indiscriminate lending or being surety for someone. Jesus was not contradicting these wisdom principles (cf. Prov. 6:1; 11:15; 17:18; 22:7, 26; 27:13).

We are not called to be naive or undiscerning. I often say that in Bible times they had an advantage in that they didn’t have phones. *You see, anyone can get on the phone and just call, claiming anything, and how am I ever going to know what is true and what is not true?* I could spend all my time going down all kinds of rabbit trails. I think the above situation assumes you have some real knowledge about this situation, it is genuine, and you are in a position to help.

“The implication is that the person who asks has a genuine need. We are not required to respond to every foolish, selfish request made of us. Sometimes, to give a person what he wants but does not need is a disservice, doing him more harm than good.” – **John MacArthur**

But there is also another contextual consideration...

“Since this entire paragraph is devoted to Jesus’ teaching against retaliation, this verse probably prohibits disciples from seeking vengeance against opponents by refusing to help them in time of need.” – **Holman Christian Standard Bible**

I like that explanation because it fits the flow of the context. And I think that rightly dividing the Word thinks in context consistently. It considers the entire counsel of God, and it considers the immediate context and the flow of thought.

Exodus 23:4–5 (NKJV)

4 “If you meet your enemy’s ox or his donkey going astray, **you shall surely bring it back to him again.**

5 If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden, and you would refrain from helping it, **you shall surely help him with it.**

The sense is that instead of retaliation, we should respond with a helping hand, and the overall context here in Matthew 5 suggests this is in response to someone you might feel like saying, “*Okay, you can just suffer because of what you have done to me.*” Again, our attitude should be gracious in spite of what they may have done to us in the past.

The whole surrounding context is emphasizing that we as kingdom citizens are not to be a vindictive people. Instead of retaliating, we just take it. Instead of retaliating, we go the extra mile. Instead of retaliating, we seek to be helpful! That is a powerful testimony.

A dear saint died. It was remembered that she would often set her own wishes aside (saying it didn’t really matter) to allow others to have their way. And it was remembered that she was not one to hold a grudge, being very forgiving and willing to help no matter what.

This is the type of attitude and lifestyle Christ is calling for in His people. It is so human to want to lash out, to be vindictive and want to retaliate, to seek some form of vengeance.

But to just take it and go on wishing for and seeking the best for those who mistreat you is the stuff of kingdom living. Really, this is supernatural living made possible only by the power of the Holy Spirit. But this is our calling as kingdom people.

I read a story about a man from Nigeria named Ibrahim. Radical Muslims attacked his village and in the process they injured him causing him to lose his eyesight.

He says, “*I was not born again before the attack came, and I lost my sight. I gave my life to Christ after the attack happened. Since then, I have not looked back.*” After a month in the hospital, he went to church and heard a sermon on forgiveness. He had felt vengeful after the attack, but upon hearing the sermon, he had a change of heart. He said, “*The message really gave me insight. I saw that the best thing was for me to forgive, so I forgave.*”

As those who have been forgiven, we are to be a forgiving people. We are not to let an attitude of vengeance control us. Our entire outlook is now to be different. We are kingdom people, and God controls our destiny. We are to let God take care of all things related to “vengeance”.

Now, admittedly, it is relatively easy to preach this and not so easy to live it out. People have a knack for doing really hurtful and hateful things that can easily get to us. We need God’s help to be what we ought to be.

When slapped, sued, abused, or used – we should not retaliate but rather seek to be gracious.

Instead of retaliating, we are to respond with grace. And to respond in grace thinks of the other person’s highest good, which is what God’s love is all about.