

# Youth Teaching Resources

February 19, 2017



## Looking Forward (January 1-February 26)

Matthew 5:13-20 – “Salt, Light, and Law”

Matthew 5:21-37 – “Then, and Now”

**Matthew 5:38-48 – “Seriously?”**

Matthew 17:1-19 – “Keeping Secrets”

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# Seriously?

Matthew 5:38-48

## YOUTH Teaching Guide

by Jeremy Colliver

This youth teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Baptists Today*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

### PARENT PREP

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Loving your enemies might be one of the hardest things that we are called to do as followers of Christ. It is even harder as parents to love those kids that pick on and disrupt our own youth's lives. How do you help your students respond to injustices that are being done is a hard line to follow? How do you stand up for your child while loving the other? Loving the other doesn't mean not holding the other accountable, but it does mean treating them with love as it is done. How you respond, while honoring your youth, will help them to realize how they should respond.

### TEACHING THE LESSON

#### Fellowship

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Begin your session by showing the clip "Love Your Enemies" from *The War*. If you are unable to show the clip, summarize it to the best of your ability, and then facilitate a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) How does the son respond to the insults? What does this cause the people throwing the insults to do?
- 2) How does the father respond to the insults? What does this cause the people throwing the insults to do?
- 3) Why is it hard to respond with love when you have been wronged?
- 4) How does your faith influence how you respond when you have been wronged?

## Information

Transition to the next section of the session by reading Matthew 5:38-48. Allow the students to ask any initial questions they have about the text. As you answer their questions, you may want to provide some of the information found in Tony's commentary to answer their questions. When the students have had an opportunity to share their initial thoughts, continue the discussion by facilitating a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) How do you think the disciples responded when they first heard these teachings from Jesus? Did they have a reason to question what Jesus was saying from what they had been previously taught?
- 2) Why was the law "eye for an eye" a progressive step toward justice? How does Jesus' new teaching move it even further toward love?
- 3) Why does Jesus want us to love our enemies?
- 4) What was Jesus trying to get his followers to move toward with all of these laws?
- 5) What does Jesus mean when he uses the word "perfect" here?
- 6) Do you think Jesus thought we could really live this way? Explain.

If your group would like to dig deeper in their discussion, share some of the insights that Tony provides in the "Digging Deeper" (available in the latter part of this youth PDF) portion of his commentary. You may want to use some questions like the following to facilitate your discussion:

- 1) Why does Jesus use hyperbole in his teachings?
- 2) How similar are the teachings of Jesus with the Hammurabi Law Code?
- 3) Why would someone be suing over a tunic in this time? What does it mean for us today?

You may also want your group to discuss "The Hardest Question" (available in the latter part of this youth PDF) if they would like to continue their discussion on this passage. Tony poses the following question to consider as "The Hardest Question": How literally should we take these teachings?

## Transformation

Conclude your session by leading the group through the practice of *Lectio Divina*. If you have not done this before, familiarize yourself with the practice before leading the group. You may want to allow the group to share at each pause of the discipline. When you have practiced *Lectio Divina*, facilitate a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) What words stuck out to you the most? What was it about these words that made them stick out to you?
- 2) What words were hardest for you to hear? Why do you think they were hard to hear?
- 3) If you completely lived out this passage, how would it transform your life? How would other people react to you?

Close with a prayer asking God for the strength to forgive and to love our enemies and to have patience with us as we try and live this out.

## Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartlege

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

**Different rules** – Many years ago, shortly after I moved to a new church field, a couple in the congregation invited me to their home for dinner and to play a card game called *Canasta*. I looked forward to it, because I grew up playing *Canasta*, but had met few other people who did. My mother’s mother was a *Canasta*-playing fanatic, and long before any of her twelve grandchildren were big enough to hold all the cards in our hand, she would teach us the rules of *Canasta*. Or, at least, she would teach us *her* rules. I thought they were the only ones.

I quickly discovered that my new friends played by different rules, and all my confidence went down the drain. I thought I was pretty good at the game I knew, but playing by their rules called for different strategies, and it was hard to break out of my old way of thinking and focus on the game they were playing.

I was so convinced that someone taught them the wrong rules that I went home and looked up “*Canasta*” in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (the Internet was still a dream and the only Google around was a bubble-eyed, donkey-riding cartoon character named Barney Google). I learned from the encyclopedia that there are several different versions of the game: not everyone plays by the same rules.

**Extreme measures** – It’s likely that Jesus employed hyperbole when talking about the measures one should employ to avoid certain sins. For example, in vv. 29-30 Matthew reports that Jesus said “If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell.”

Jesus knew that chopping off a hand might deter a thief, but wouldn’t change his spirit – and one-eyed people are perfectly capable of lust. Though employing physical symbols, Jesus was more concerned with inner motivations than outward behavior. His kingdom ethic called for radical surgery to the mind and heart that rules our hands and eyes.



**Hammurabi’s law code** – This copy of the famed stele of Hammurabi is in the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. The engraving at the top shows Hammurabi, the smaller figure at left, receiving the laws from Shamash, the sun god.

## Digging Deeper *continued*

**A frivolous lawsuit?** – Why would someone sue another person for his or her tunic? The situation would probably reflect a small-time lender who had loaned someone money, with his or her tunic as collateral. Old Testament law spoke to similar loans, insisting that someone who took a poor person’s outer cloak as collateral should return it each night, lest the person have nothing to guard against the evening chill.

“If you take your neighbor’s cloak in pawn, you shall restore it before the sun goes down; for it may be your neighbor’s only clothing to use as cover; in what else shall that person sleep? And if your neighbor cries out to me, I will listen, for I am compassionate” (Exod. 22:26-27).

**A Roman mile** – New Testament references to a “mile” reflect the Roman definition of a mile as 1,000 paces, with each pace equal to five Roman feet. The Roman measure of a foot was slightly shorter than today, so that the total distance was just under 5,000 feet, a bit shorter than the 5,280 feet that currently defines a mile. The name “mile” derives from the Latin term *mille passum*, meaning “1,000 paces.”

# The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartlege

The Hardest Question is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

## How literally should we take these teachings?

Jesus' teachings may not seem practical. It's obvious that Jesus was upholding an ideal that is the complete opposite of selfishness, but was he speaking in hyperbole? Was he intentionally exaggerating in order to make a point? That's possible. I doubt Jesus expects his followers to walk around shirtless or with two black eyes. I don't think he expects us to go empty our bank accounts when a homeless person on the corner holds up a cardboard sign. There's a difference between being a total patsy and having a loving, generous spirit.

But let's not get too comfortable. Jesus clearly expected his followers to do more than they were accustomed to doing, and I suspect he expects more of us, as well. Most of us don't get punched in the face very often. We rarely have someone ask for the shirt off of our backs.

I suspect Jesus was more concerned about relationships than finances. In every situation, Jesus expects us to think of what the other person needs, not just what we need, and to do what we can to help that other person. He calls us to be so generous of spirit that we show grace to every person we meet.

Often what others need most is not material goods or a chance to hit us again: what they need most is forgiveness, or understanding, or acceptance. Few things in this world are harder than to love someone who hates us, or to forgive someone who has hurt us. It just doesn't seem natural. But what Jesus teaches here is that what seems natural is not necessarily what is best. For Christian people, *our* actions and attitudes are not to be determined by the actions and attitudes of someone else.

We should not let someone else's negative behavior make us negative. We should not let others' hostility make us hostile. We should not let someone else's insensitivity make us insensitive, or let their meanness make us mean. Even though we may *be* victims of others' actions, we are not required to live as victims, or to continue being victimized by living with a cancerous grudge.

What an incredible thought! God is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked – and God calls us to act in the same way. That may not seem fair to us, and we may think it is not fair of God to expect us to act the same way. *But if God were not kind to the ungrateful and the wicked, if God were not merciful, then where would we be?*

But God is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked, and because of that, Jesus came into the world and allowed ungrateful and wicked people to treat him terribly and then hang him on a cross, and just before he breathed his last, he had the love and the courage to forgive them.

## The Hardest Question *continued*

Now, it may seem to us that forgiving someone who has hurt us or being kind to someone who hates us is impossible, but Jesus insisted that nothing is impossible with God. We can be merciful, even as our Father in heaven is merciful.

We may not always feel like being merciful, but it's important to remember that love and forgiveness are *actions*, not just *feelings*. We can *act* in a merciful and loving way, even when we don't *feel* very kind toward the one who has hurt us.

It sounds radical, but Jesus insisted that we should not base our love and generosity on whether others are loving and generous. Rather, we love others – even when it seems crazy – because that is what Jesus does, and what he has called us to do. That is who God is and who God calls his children to be. Loving. Forgiving. Even to those who don't deserve it.

Really.