

FLIPPED

"THE FLIPSIDE OF ANGER" MATTHEW 5:21-26

This Week's Core Competency

Peace – I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, others, and myself. Philippians 4:6, 7 *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Getting along with people, even Christian brothers and sisters, isn't always easy. Matter of fact, you might argue that it's always hard. No wonder Paul's exhortation to "live at peace with everyone" is accompanied by two caveats: "if it is possible," and "as far as it depends on you" (Ro 12:18). By the way, his "everybody" includes spouses, children, grandparents, grandchildren, even crazy uncle Charlie; sometimes we overlook our responsibility to behave "Christianly" towards members of our own family.

Maintaining healthy amicable relationships with others is hard work, and when that hard work is neglected for any reason those relationships can languish. Just ask Syntyche and Euodia! No wonder relationships is one of the four big things people ask prayer for along with finances, health, and jobs. My spouse doesn't love me anymore; pray for our marriage. Our son is rebellious; pray he returns to the Lord. A coworker makes my job impossible;

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

- Paul

pray that he will let up on me. The list of requests goes on and on. So many things can send a relationship careening into a ditch. One person betrays another's confidence. Another person fails to keep his word. A teenage son lies to his parents. A father breaks promises to his daughter. A husband takes his wife for granted. A wife humiliates her husband in public. The offences are sometimes minor; the consequences seldom are.

I'm reminded of friends whose good relationship was ended by a bad investment. The two men, both prominent leaders in their church, invested in a business. When their joint venture went belly up, the one went to the other to say, "About that loan I made you, you don't have to repay it now. You can repay it as soon as you get back on your feet." To which the other replied, "What loan? We both invested money in the business, and we both lost the money we invested. I didn't borrow any money from you. You invested your money along with me." Their dispute went public, and the whole church was affected more or less by their falling out. The one told me, "I know taking another Christian to court isn't right, but he owes me a lot of money." The two men and their families continued to go to church together, but never spoke to each other again. They attended a big church.

So what is a brother to do when a relationship is threatened? According to Jesus, disciples are to take the initiative in seeking reconciliation. Nursing anger toward another person is serious business. It may not involve the shedding of blood, but it's still a violation of the sixth commandment, "Do not

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murder." Therefore, "If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift" (Mt 5:23). As far as Jesus is concerned, reconciliation takes priority over worship. What's more, disciples are to do what they are to do, quickly. "Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court," he says (v. 24), and thereby turn your adversary into your friend. Waiting for the other person to act is unacceptable.

For Discussion

You posted some pictures of you and friends hanging out, having a good time on Facebook—simply silly ones you thought, very unflattering ones a friend thought. When she mentioned she was embarrassed by them and asked why you posted them without asking her, you made matters worse by not taking her protest seriously. After all, who gets permission to post pictures on Facebook? You told her she was making a mountain out of a molehill and pointed out that no one else was embarrassed by them. You're sure you didn't do anything wrong, but your friend is still upset with you.

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Matthew 5:21-26

21 "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' 22 But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.

23 "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

25 "Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. 26 I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny. (NIV(c)1984)

Cf., another translation

21 "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' 22 But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire. 23 So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. 25 Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. 26 Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny. (ESV)

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Bracket "it was said" in v. 21.
- * Underline "people long ago" in v. 21.
- * Circle "murder" in v. 21.
- * Circle "subject to judgment" in v. 21.
- * Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 22.
- * Bracket "I tell you" in v. 22.
- * Circle "brother" in v. 22.

- * Circle "Raca" in v. 22.
- * Circle "fool" in v. 22.
- * Circle "hell" in v. 22.
- * Box "therefore" indicating *result* in v. 23.
- * Underline "against you" in v. 23.
- * Circle "adversary" in v. 25.

day **2**

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. About whom is Jesus talking in verse 21?
2. About what is Jesus talking in verse 21?
3. Identify the *contrast* introduced in verse 22.
4. Explain the relationship of what Jesus told his hearers to what God told "people long ago."
5. Does Jesus consider being angry with a fellow Christian a violation of the sixth commandment? Explain.
6. How can Jesus take name calling so seriously?
7. What do you infer about reconciliation from Jesus' first illustration?
8. What does Jesus' second illustration add to the thrust of his first?
9. **Discussion:** Talk about the practical possibility of following Jesus' teaching regarding anger.

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

Jesus continues to instruct his disciples in Matthew 5:21-47. This section of his Sermon on the Mount contains six so-called "antitheses," because six times he makes similar statements, "You have heard that it was said . . . but I say to you" (vv. 21-22, 27-28, 31-32, 33-34, 38-39 43-44). Jesus' words raise questions regarding his intent and purpose. Is he attempting to correct his disciples' faulty interpretation of the law? Is he trying to build a "hedge" around it to keep them from transgressing it? Is he making demands that transcend or go beyond it? Commentators generally agree that the one thing he is not doing is contradicting the law. The following comment is typical, "Jesus' declaration is the antithesis of what has gone before. This has been mistakenly interpreted to mean that Jesus makes his teaching the antithesis of the Old Testament. But if we look closely, we will see that Jesus is contrasting his interpretation of the Old Testament with faulty interpretations and/or applications" (Michael J. Wilkins, *The NIV Application Commentary: Matthew*, 240). While true, perhaps it would be more to the point to say that he is revealing implications inherent in the Old Testament law, implications generally overlooked by his contemporaries. For example, he reveals that the commandment, "Do not commit adultery" (v. 27) entails the implication do not look at a woman lustfully (v. 28). A person doesn't have to actually have sex to break the seventh commandment; it's possible to commit adultery in one's heart and thereby break the seventh commandment. Verses 21-26 indicate it's likewise possible to commit murder in one's heart. As one author explains, "It is not correct to say that he replaces the law with his own commands, for in no case does he relax a provision of the law. Rather, he shows that, rightly understood, the law goes much further than his hearers had reckoned" (Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 114).

Verse 21 might be paraphrased as follows: "You have learned" because hearing was the normal way of learning in Jesus' day. "The formula pointedly draws attention to God's act of giving Israel the Law that was orally read and expounded in their worship settings" (Robert A. Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 182); "that God said" because the passive voice ("it was said") often indicates divine

activity, and certainly the sixth commandment was spoken by God; "to our ancestors at Sinai" because they were the original recipients of the Mosaic Law; "Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be liable to judgment in court" because the reference to the Sanhedrin in the next verse suggests the word translated "judgment" [*krisis*] refers to a court proceeding rather than a judicial sentence.

Verse 22 introduces a contrast. In it Jesus reveals that anyone who is angry with a brother, anyone who calls his brother a hateful name like "idiot" or "fool" is also liable to judgment in court and runs the risk of hell fire. He doesn't equate angry name-calling with murder; he simply makes clear that both are violations of the sixth commandment. "He confronts his audience: You who think yourselves far removed, morally speaking, from murderers—have you not hated? Have you never wished someone were dead? Have you not frequently stooped to the use of contempt, even to character assassination? All such vilifying anger lies at the root of murder, and makes a thoughtful man conscious that he differs not a whit, morally speaking, from the actual murderer" (D. A. Carson, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 41). Just as murder has no place in the life of his disciples neither does anger and hateful name-calling. "These verses make one great point. The Old Testament law forbidding murder must not be thought adequately satisfied when no blood has been shed. Rather, the law points toward a more fundamental problem, man's vilifying anger. Jesus by his own authority insists that the judgment thought to be reserved for the actual murderer in reality hangs over the wrathful, the spiteful, the contemptuous" (41).

So what are Jesus' disciples to do? According to verses 23-25, they are to make reconciliation an urgent priority. Jesus says being reconciled to an offended brother is to take priority over worship. It's the responsibility of the offending party. He says being reconciled to an adversary should be pursued "quickly." More than simply discharging legal affairs, Jesus' disciples are to seek a kind of reconciliation that turns their adversaries into their friends. They understand the righteous requirements of the law like Jesus did and live life like their master.

The Message of the Passage

Christ's disciples don't nurse anger or express hateful contempt for their Christian brothers and sisters but seek to be reconciled to others they have offended.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your thoughts on the passage:**

–Write about what God wants you to know . . .

–Write about how God wants you to feel . . .

–Write about what God wants you to do . . .

“The Flipside of Anger”

(Use the space below for Sunday's message notes)

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

- v. 21 **you have heard** "The introductory formula reminds the audience that they have heard—the normal way of learning—that God said to those of old regarding his will, the Law. The formula pointedly draws attention to God's act of giving Israel the Law that was orally read and expounded in the worship settings. It is precisely this law and not its traditional interpretation or understanding that is countered in the Antitheses" (Robert A. Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 182).
- v. 21 **it was said** The passive voice often implies divine action, i.e., "God said." (The force of the passive is to avoid referring to God directly.) The direct quotation of the sixth commandment (Ex 20:13) confirms that this is the case here.
- v. 21 **people long ago** Cf., "our ancestors" (NLT, NJB). "'To those of early times,' which occurs also in the fourth antithesis (v. 33), is probably meant to refer to the original recipients of the Mosaic law (thus the majority of commentators). Although this phrase does not occur with the other four antitheses, it is probably presupposed, as the consistent use of [*errethe*] 'it was said' (sc. 'God said,' divine passive) confirms" (Donald A. Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 33a, *Matthew 1-13*, 115).
- v. 21 **murder** "'Murder' is the correct rendering since the underlying Hebrew (*ratsach*, sometimes translated 'kill') did not include killing in self-defense, wars ordered by Yahweh, capital punishment following due process of law, or accidental manslaughter." (Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, 106).
- v. 21 **subject to** Cf., "liable to" (ESV). "Two further occurrences of [*enochos estai*] ('shall be liable to') in v 22 are linked with 'the sanhedrin' and 'the Gehenna of fire.' It is difficult to solve the exegetical puzzle regarding whether the four references are essentially synonymous or the last two are meant to involve higher penalties (as Str-B argue, 1:276), and whether we move through three different courts, the local, the sanhedrin, and the divine. Jeremias, however, is probably correct when he argues that the passage simply contains 'three expressions for the death penalty in a kind of crescendo' (*TDNT* 6:975)" (Hagner, 115).
- v. 21 **judgment** The Gk. term [*krisis*] can mean either a judicial sentence or a court-proceeding; hence, the difference in translation (cf., "the court" [NASB]; "a trial" [Guelich, 184]). "The penalty in all three instances is ultimately the same, namely, death. The difference lies in the various levels of court proceedings (see Note on 5:22)" (184).
- v. 22 **Raca** This term [*raka*] is a transliteration of an Aramaic word meaning "empty-headed." "The word means something like 'blockhead' or 'idiot,' but in that culture conveying a much more objectionable insult than in modern Western society" (Hagner, 116). "This form of anger, Jesus says, renders a person subject to the Sanhedrin (which would support the view that the judgment in the earlier part of the verse means that of the law court). Sanhedrin means 'council' (e.g., 10:17), but it is used mostly in the New Testament for the high council of the Jews, It comprised priests, elders, and scribes, and the high priest was its president. It was the highest authority among the Jews, not only in religious affairs, but in governmental and legal matters also" (Morris, 114, 15).
- v. 22 **fool** The derivation of Gk. word [*more*] is debated (see Guelich, 187, 88). In any case the two words "Raca" and "fool" are nearly synonymous. "Some have tried to see in these three steps—anger, 'Raca,' 'you fool!'—a gradation; but it is difficult to believe that Jesus is stooping to such casuistry. Would he resort to hairsplitting distinctions between 'Raca' and 'you fool'? And could either be meaningfully spit out without anger? Jesus is simply multiplying examples to drive the lesson home. He is a preacher who makes his point and then makes his hearers feel its weight" (Carson, 41). "The words [*raka*] and [*more*] are thus roughly equivalent, with the latter involving no escalation of offence" (Hagner, 117; see also Guelich, 188).
- v. 22 **fire of hell** "The expression 'fire of hell' is *geenna*, from which we get the English transliteration 'Gehenna.' It is a transliteration of the Aramaic form of the Hebrew *ge ben-hinnom* ('valley of the son of Hinnom'), a valley west and southwest of Jerusalem. Here Ahaz and Manasseh sacrificed their sons to Molech, which caused Josiah to defile the place (2 Kings 23:10). Later the valley was used to burn refuse from Jerusalem, so the constant burning made the valley an appropriate reference to fires of punishment. Jewish apocalyptic writers began to call the Valley of Hinnom the entrance to hell, later hell itself (4 Ezra 7:36). By the time of Jesus the term was used to indicate the state of final punishment (cf. Matt. 18:9)" (Wilkins, 243).
- v. 25 **adversary** If "brother" refers to another disciple, perhaps "adversary" refers to one who is not a disciple. "The second scene is on the way to court, where a litigant is taking a disciple, apparently over some dispute about money (5:26). This probably assumes a Gentile legal setting, since we have no record in Jewish law of imprisonment for debt" (243).
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Family Time

Family time will help you take a break from your busy schedule and spend time connecting with your family.
Tips for your Family Time: Keep it simple! Be flexible! Do it often! HAVE FUN!!

In this week's text, Jesus teaches us how we are to handle conflict with others. Unfortunately, our culture thrives on controversy. People are much more likely to handle their disagreements in Judge Judy's courtroom than to follow the guidelines in Matthew 5:21-26. This week as you have discussions regarding Jesus' plan for us to live peacefully with others, plan to have a family war - a water war, that is! Gather water guns, water balloons and your water hoses and pick teams. Include your neighbors for a full out water war. Each team will pick a base to house their water balloons and water guns. When the game begins, members will try to sneak into the opposite team's base to seize control of their balloons. Set a time limit for each round of your game. At the end of each round, line up team members to see which team looks wetter. The driest team wins the round. If you would rather keep your water fun out of the war zone, google water balloon games to find many great games that will keep your family having fun and staying cool! Remember to remind your family that Jesus wants us to live in peace with Him and others. You can also use this as an opportunity to pray for the people in countries where there is civil unrest and war.

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Matthew 5:21-26

1. According to this passage, who is subject to judgment?
2. What does the Bible say you are to do if you are going to worship and remember you have a conflict with someone?
3. In the memory verse this week, what is the guideline for resolving conflicts?

What Do You Think

1. Why do you think it is important for believer's to handle conflict with each other quickly?
2. Do you think most people want to live in peace?
3. As children of God, in what ways can we model/teach others how to live at peace?
4. How do we get peace with God?

What R U Going To Do

Make a Sunset Contract with your family. Type up a contract with this week's memory verse and a commitment stating your family will try to resolve conflicts with each other before bed each day. Have all family members sign it and post it somewhere everyone can see and be reminded of your family's decision to live in peace.

MEMORY TIME

Post the kid-friendly Core Competency and the Memory Verse throughout the house.

Core Comp

Peace - I live without worry because things are good between God, myself and others.

Memory Verse

Eph 4:26, 27 "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold."

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC ____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** _____ **Think** _____ **Do** _____

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.
 Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.