

A Meditation

It is easy to strike back at someone who wrongs you.

An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth may seem fair, even logical . . .

It addresses a felt need for a response to wrong and does call for limits on that response;

but does it right the wrong?

Will it stop the wrongdoer from striking back in return?

Will it stop wrong?

Does it make life better for anyone?

Jesus said an eye for an eye was old thinking.

It could leave the whole world blind and toothless with no one better off.

Jesus taught a new way.

He said if you are struck; turn the other cheek;

if forced labor is demanded, do more than you are required to do.

Offer help even when no repayment can be expected.

He said return good for evil and love those who mean you harm.

Jesus knew, responding to a wrong in kind empowers the wrongdoer not the one wronged.

It makes the one wronged become like the wrongdoer not the other way around!

Jesus shifted the focus from the wrongdoer to the one wronged.

Jesus knew an action – once taken, cannot be un-done.

He knew that if the one wronged does not strike back, there is no strike to be returned.

He knew one wronged cannot be forever controlled by a wrong if they forgive the wrongdoer and respond with love not hate.

It is responding with forgiveness and love that empowers the one wronged!

Jesus returned good for evil even to the point of giving his life and forgiving those who took it.

The only actions you can control are your own.

Forgiving a wrongdoer will make life better for the one wronged since it frees them from the destructiveness of blame and hate.

Forgiveness offered may change the life of the wrongdoer as well; but even if it does not . . .

It will show there is another way.

It will break the cycle of wrong for wrong.

Scripture: Matthew 5:43-48

This week in your prayer time:

- **Those effected by gun violence** –There have been 20 incidents in which 4 or more people were injured or killed in August. At least 114 people have been killed by guns in the U.S. this week.
- **Why do we kill people who kill people to show that killing is wrong?** The 1987 Annual Conference statement on the death penalty says in part: “To take the life of any person is to destroy what has been created by God and redeemed by Christ. To admit that there are those who are beyond saving is to deny the ultimate power of redemption, the cross and the empty tomb.” (www.brethren.org/ac/statements/1987deathpenalty.html)
After 16 years of not using the death penalty, the current administration announced on July 25, that the federal government will resume its use & has ordered the Federal Bureau of Prisons to schedule the executions of 5 prisoners on death row.
- **People in U.S. custody on the border & families torn apart by deportations** – Inhumane, cruel & degrading treatment of refugees at the U.S. border continues. The treatment of family members in mass deportation raids is inexcusable. Children should never be incarcerated. The current administration is now trying to incarcerate people at the border indefinitely.
- **Kenya, South Sudan, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Angola, & Mozambique were tens of millions of people face hunger due to extended drought linked to climate change** – Insufficient rains for two seasons have caused serious food shortage, water scarcity & diminished pasture for livestock. People are trying to conserve food and water, but already, some have nothing to eat & will soon need aid. UN agencies estimate nearly 7 million people face critical food shortages in South Sudan alone.



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