

# PRESENT TRUTH

A Teaching Letter of Lifestream Teaching Ministries

*For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. (2 Peter 1:12 NKJV)*

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## Everyday Choices

### Introduction

While we think of our life as made up of the big decisions that we have made with God, in actuality, the life in us that is seen by others is revealed by how we make the everyday choices. How would the world know that we, as disciples of the Lord, are different from the world if our reactions to the everyday problems, slights, and injustices are not different? Our natural inclination is to act like the world and solve our problems in the same manner as the world solves theirs. However, our natural reaction arises from our old nature not our new nature. We learn new behavior by the tutelage of the Holy Spirit applying the words of Jesus to our hearts causing us to act and react from our new nature and not our old.

### Problem Situations

In what we call the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus spoke clearly about the difference between the old law that was being fulfilled and the new law of the Spirit of Life. He repeatedly said “*you have heard it said of old, but I say to you...*”. With this process He moved the the law from that which was written on stone tablets by the finger of God to that which is written on our hearts by the Holy Spirit. The law moved from policing outward behavior to becoming an inward condition of the heart. The law becomes a part of who we are not just something that we do to avoid judgment or punishment.

While I have written a number of articles about the laws of the Kingdom of God, in this Teaching Letter I want to focus on this section of Matthew 5:

Matthew 5:38-42 NASB

- (38) "You have heard that it was said, 'AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH.'
- (39) "But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.
- (40) "If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also.
- (41) "Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two.

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

Jesus is presenting problem situations in which choices are necessary in the everyday exchanges of life. We move toward the freedom of Kingdom living through gaining new insights into our hearts and a new dependence upon God.

Jesus begins with a natural response of one who is wronged—retaliation. The old law of an eye for an eye was a limitation on what our natural retaliation response could do. It balanced the scales of justice. The level of punishment could not exceed the level of the crime. However, under the new Kingdom law, Jesus said "resist not an evil person!". That is certainly a difficult assignment. It is not something that the natural man can do. But, our new nature is capable of seeing new light and hearing new truth and of changing character and conduct.

Jesus presents us with four offenses that would naturally produce retaliation:

1. a slap in the face,
2. a lawsuit,
3. mandatory servitude, and
4. favor seeking.

Instead of our natural reaction, He gives us four substitute reactions:

1. turn the other cheek,
2. give the one suing more than required,
3. go the second mile,
4. don't turn away from those asking favors.

The spirit of revenge is built into our fallen human nature. Jesus provides situations to free us from the spirit of revenge. Who needs to learn to turn the other cheek? The one who retaliates. Something in the person needs breaking and correcting. We can see the practical application of this law in John 18:22,23 and Acts 23:1-5. In looking at these scriptures remember: attitude determines acceptable responses.

Let's look at two words:

- **Flexible**—pliable, supple, elastic, yielding
- **Inflexible**—brittle, hard, unyielding, rigid.

A dead branch is inflexible; it breaks when you bend it. A fossil is a piece of organic matter that failed to make the change and has become crystallized and inflexible. A piece of hard clay is unyielding; but, with squeezing and the warmth of pressure, it can become soft, pliable, and usable. Romans 9:21 asks the question, "*Hath not the potter power over the clay...?*" God takes us, hard, stiff, and cold, and begins to work on us. He takes us from situation to situation to bring us into His desired state of flexibility.

## Trained

Before Christ we knew no other way to act or react than that which we had learned as we grew up in our culture and society. Because this was all that we knew we had no thought of doing anything differently. After meeting Christ we have a new nature that is not bound by how we grew up. The new nature is capable of behavior that is consistent with the desires of the Lord. We now have conflicting natures in us resulting in the problem that Paul described: “For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I *would* like to *do*, but I am doing the very thing I hate.” (Romans 7:15 NASB)

We have to learn how to walk in the Spirit, give expression to our new nature. Paul spoke of the mature, who “*because of practice have their senses trained*” (Heb. 5:14). It is our senses that are the stimulus for our actions and reactions. We must train them by practice. The Lord is gracious to provide us with many situations where we can learn to do this until our everyday choices are an expression of the new nature, which is the character of Jesus.

Paul says that he **learned** how to be abased and how to abound (Philippians 4:11-13). In other words, he learned how to react to his circumstances and problems in a manner consistent with the Kingdom principles spoken of by Jesus. He learned, by the situations that he found himself in, how to be flexible; finding in the process that he could do all things through Christ.

Our life is expressed in the everyday, sometimes even the mundane, things of normal living. This life is different than the life that is in the world. Our interactions with our everyday problems reveal to us and others how much we are actually walking in the spirit.

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