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# Christ's Recipe For Happiness

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You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." But I say to you, do not resist him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone wants to sue you, and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. And whoever shall force you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks of you, and do not run away from him who wants to borrow from you. You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy." But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous (Matthew 5:38-45).

**I**N Matthew 5:38-45 we see the characteristic ethic of the Christian life. Jesus teaches us how a Christian's conduct should distinguish him from non-Christians.

These words are a part of Jesus' great Sermon on the Mount. It was presented just outside the little village of Capernaum, on a sloping hill overlooking the Sea of Galilee. The sermon begins with the word "blessed." There is no question about the kind of life Jesus came to impart. He wants our lives to be filled with joy, happiness, and blessedness. I do not know where we ever got the impression that Christians are to be glum, morose, and sad-eyed. For too long we Christians have left the impression that the only pleasure man can have is in sin! In this sermon Jesus give us the structure for a happy Christian life.

The Master Teacher in these words provides a recipe for happiness. He does not give us a shortcut to happiness, but He does give us a sure-cut to happiness.

## **I. TURN THE OTHER CHEEK (5:39)**

Jesus said, "But I say to you, do not resist him

who is evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also" (5:39). What did Jesus mean by this statement? There is far more here than meets the eye. Jesus is not teaching pacifism. He is not talking about war, self-defense, or the necessity of protecting our nation, our homes, or even our lives.

He was stating a great principle: *Do not try to get even; do not seek revenge.* He was pointing out the danger of building up resentments within and seeking some way to hurt someone else a little more than he has hurt us.

Jesus practiced this principle perfectly. He was insulted many times. He was called a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber. He was called the friend of tax collectors and harlots, implying that He was like the company He kept. He never struck back. Isaiah said, "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so he did not open His mouth" (Isaiah 53:7).

A famous surgeon was called after 10:00 p.m. He rushed over to a mansion and was met at the door by a famous painter. He was taken through many rooms in the mansion to a little sun porch where, among the cushions, lay a tiny poodle with a broken leg. The great surgeon almost froze with astonishment. Then swallowing his pride, for the moment, he opened his bag, set the bone, and put on the splint just as carefully and tenderly as if he were ministering to a king. As the doctor prepared to leave, he was told, "Doctor, send me a big bill. I don't care how much it is; I'll pay it." The doctor said, "I'll not send you a bill at all. Come to my office next week, and we'll talk about the payment." The next week,

when the artist arrived, the doctor said, "You are a painter, aren't you?" He answered, "I paint portraits and landscapes." "Well, come with me," said the doctor. He was then taken through three or four rooms to a little room which had nothing in it but a cabinet covered with newspapers in the middle of the floor. Near the cabinet was a can of white paint and a cheap brush. "Paint the cabinet and we'll call the bill for the dog square," said the doctor as he turned and walked out. A little while later, the artist came back to the doctor's office. With no resentment in his voice at all, he asked, "Doctor, are you going to be using that room for the next three or four days?" "No, take your time. Paint it anytime you want to," said the doctor. "May I have the key to it?" the artist asked. He locked it up and a few days later came back and smilingly said, "I've finished painting the cabinet. Come and look at it. I hope it suits you." There on the front of that cabinet was a masterpiece. The doctor stood there a moment with his mouth open, and then with his eyes a little bit misty, stuck out his hand and said, "You are a better man than I am. I'll take that home and put it in my living room, but I won't tell the world how ugly I was to you."

Just suppose the artist had painted the cabinet white as the doctor suggested. They would have squared off at each other and been enemies the rest of their lives. Instead, they became the closest of friends. They made each other happy. That is what Jesus is talking about when He said, "Turn the other cheek."

## II. LOVE FOR YOUR ENEMIES (5:44)

Jesus said, "But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you" (5:44). Here is one of the hardest things to do. No one will dispute that much happiness is wrapped up in it. It is true that when you pray for others you get a blessing for yourself.

A preacher in Texas said, "The best way to get rid of your enemies is to pray for them. It will help them and it will help you." The preacher went back to his motel room and was fast asleep when the phone rang. When he answered it, he heard a sob and then a woman's very tearful voice said, "Preacher, I just can't do it." He asked gently, "Do what?" She answered, "I can't pray for someone who has used me spitefully. I can't do it, and I'm miserable." The telephone

clicked and the conversation was over. The preacher never knew what the woman's situation was, but I know this: If you cannot pray for people who spitefully use you, you are going to be miserable.

In his book, *Shields of Brass*, Roy Angell tells this story. A machinist was cursing in a railroad machine shop. Uncle Matt Duvall, a black man, was standing nearby holding his hat. Tearfully, he said, in a most respectful voice, "Boss, please don't take my Lord's name in vain. It hurts me deep inside." The machinist said in a rough voice, "Tend to your own business." As Uncle Matt slowly turned to walk away, he said, "I'm gonna pray for you." For awhile, the machinist just sat still, mumbling something to himself. But when he did curse again he would look around to see where Uncle Matt was! One day on that same job, the machinist had a terrible accident. A powerful electric drill jumped out of its place and caught in his overalls. It tore him to pieces. He was taken to a nearby hospital. Later, one of his fellow workers visited him and as he started to leave, asked if there was anything he could do. The machinist answered, "Just one thing. Ask Uncle Matt to pray for me." Prayer does change things, as truly as it changes the one who prays.

## III. IMITATE GOD (5:45)

Jesus said, ". . . in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (5:45). Is Jesus saying, "If you turn the other cheek, go the second mile, give to him that asketh thee, pray for them which spitefully use you, you will be the children of your Father which is in heaven"? Yes, He is saying that if we do these things, people will know we belong to God and He belongs to us. They will know that you could not possibly do all these things without being a Christian, a child of God.

In the book *Her Father's Daughter* by Jean Stratton Porter, the father was a naturalist and loved all the wild things that lived in the forest. The snakes would not bite him; they would never even coil as he passed. No danger ever phased him. Even the squirrels did not hide when he was around; they just sat and looked at

him. People marveled. The naturalist had one daughter who traveled with him constantly. When he died, she took his place. The wild things treated her just as they had her father, and people said, "She is her father's daughter."

A bum was praying over and over, "Dear God, make me like Joe." A preacher said, "Ask God to make you like Jesus." He opened his eyes and looked up at the preacher in astonishment, and asked, "Was Jesus any better than Joe?" Everybody on the bowery loved Joe. He had been converted and spent the last two years of his life entirely devoted to Christ. He had been responsible for sending many people off the bowery. Joe had been buried that afternoon, and the bums of the bowery wept.

A little urchin boy was looking in a store window at Christmas time. A man noticed the little boy. He went outside and asked him what he was going to get for Christmas. The little boy

explained how his father was sick and unable to work and that his mother was barely able to pay the rent and buy groceries. He said he would not be getting anything for Christmas. The man took him inside and bought him several things. As the little boy started to leave, he hugged the man and asked, "Mister, are you God? The man said, "No, Son, I'm just one of His children." I believe this is what Jesus meant when He said, "Do these things and all the world will know that you are a Child of God."

### CONCLUSION

Are you a Christian? It is wonderful to be a Christian. It is the best of two worlds.

Are you a happy Christian? Have you learned to turn the other cheek, etc.? Begin to live as Jesus tells you in these verses, and you will be happy and known as a child of your Father.

—J. Wayne Kilpatrick

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