



DISCUSSION GUIDE

Week 5

May 1st & 2nd, 2010

Small Group Warm-Up

Have you ever taken a self-defense course of any kind? If so, tell us a little about that experience and what you learned through it.

Opening Prayer

Father God, thank you for the power of your love. You always go the extra mile to extend your love to us. Help us to learn how to love others in the same way you have loved us.

Discussion Questions

1. Read Matthew 5:38-42 (In the New Living Translation, if possible)

This weekend Pastor James taught us that the verse quoted from Exodus 21 (eye for eye, and tooth for tooth) showed Israel that God is just, and that the punishment for wrongdoing should fit the crime. He went on to say that human beings have a propensity to escalate violence when we are wronged, but this verse is teaching us a new way to respond, rather than running from or escalating the problem. In this passage Jesus addresses several different scenarios. Let's talk about how they might look in a modern day context:

- When faced with an insult (a slap on the cheek in Jesus' day was a move to insult or belittle another person), Jesus says we are to stand our ground and wait quietly. This sounds almost impossible, but what do you think the outcome might be if you could do this?
- When someone tries to bully you through a lawsuit that attempts to strip you down, Jesus says to offer them something more. Wow! This sounds even harder!! Have you ever been involved in a frivolous lawsuit? What was the result? Have you ever been involved in a lawsuit that went on and on and on, slowly bleeding your financial resources, emotional resources, time, and energy? Could it be best to settle early and move on with your life? How could the other person be impacted if we responded the way Jesus tells us to?
- When someone who is in a position of power forces you to help them with a burdensome task (similar to the Roman soldier forcing a Jew to carry his gear for a mile), Jesus says to do something extra for them. What is a modern day example of this? What do you think the impact would be if you were to try this?
- When someone asks you for help, Jesus says we are not to turn away, but to do something for that person they cannot do for themselves. What is a modern day example of this? I'm sure we've all been asked for money by beggars on the street. What is a wise way to offer help?

2. Read Matthew 27:27-37

In this passage we see how Jesus responded to being beaten, insulted, having even his clothing taken away, and being forced to walk and carry his own cross. He chose to give up his life so that you and I could receive forgiveness and a brand new opportunity to experience a relationship with God.

- How does it make you feel to think about the shame and pain Jesus endured for your sake?
- Would you be willing to endure hardship if you knew another person would come into relationship with God as a result?
- What kinds of opportunities might come your way this week to endure hardship for the sake of Christ?

Closing Prayer

Jesus, thank you for being willing to suffer at the hands of evil men so that we could receive forgiveness and be restored to relationship with God. Help us learn how to respond to difficult situations in redemptive ways, rather than escalating violence or selfishness. We need your help to do so.



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