

EVEN WHEN YOU'RE GOD, THAT HURTS

Many casual readers of the Bible think that the "Golden Rule" given by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount is the way God wants His children to interact with each other – "treat others like you want to be treated."

Matthew 7:12 Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

However, if you take His statement in context, you will note that this is NOT what Jesus was saying. Rather, He was saying that when you "treat others like you want to be treated" you have fulfilled the Old Testament law. The standard for the New Testament believer is actually much higher!

Ephesians 4:31-32 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

As a New Testament believer, you don't "treat others like you want to be treated" – absolutely not! Why? Because, sometimes, the way you want to be treated by them is not at all the way they want to be treated by you! And because, all the time, you are not a very good judge of what is kind or fair. You are too blinded by what YOU want out of the relationship. So, the standard for New Testament believers is "treat others like God treated you!"

This has HUGE implications for all of our human relationships ... because when WE try to sort things out it all comes down to who is the most powerful person in the room ... but when LOVE sorts things out it the most powerful person in the room lays aside their power for the sake of the relationship, often at great personal cost ...

Pastoring exposes you to the rough side of human relationships, perhaps unlike any other profession in the world ...

The parents with the rebellious teenager who has spurned their counsel and concern to become sullen and hateful ... when you're a parent, that hurts.

The husband or wife with the abusive spouse who treats them with such disdain that it kills their self-esteem ... when you're a spouse, that hurts.

The husband or wife with the sinful spouse who has callously disregarded their vows and walked away ... when you're a spouse, that hurts.

The friend who has spent thousands of hours listening, caring and investing in a friendship only to be betrayed ... when you're a friend, that hurts.

The pastor with the rebellious church members who do anything to criticize and undermine his leadership ... when you're a pastor, that hurts.

Even many Christians think today that our standard of behavior is the "Golden Rule" when Jesus called us to something much, much higher ...

Matthew 18:23-35 Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

This king did more than "the Golden Rule" because he was smart enough to realize that he was holding in his hand a debt that was uncollectible. There was no payment he could extract from his offender that could ever compensate for his loss. But he realized that FORGIVENESS would free Him to get on with his life, and break the cycle of hurt and unfairness. That's why he offered forgiveness to the servant with the huge debt. He did the right thing in God's eyes ... **but even when you're a king, that hurts!**

That's why Jesus taught us to "turn the other cheek" and break the cycle:

Matthew 5:38-39 Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

These verses show the contrast between OT law and NT grace!

Forgiveness is the obligation of the forgiven. How in the world could a servant who had been forgiven so much by the King then refuse to grant forgiveness to another servant who owed him so much less? There is an inseparable link between granting forgiveness and receiving forgiveness!

(This is the only "P.S." on the Lord's Prayer!)

The King forgave us ... but even when you're a king, that hurts!

I've been asked the question many times, "If God is ONE as He says repeatedly in His Word, then why does God bother with this business of the "FATHER" and the "SON" in describing redemption?" After all, the "SON" simply refers to the "BODY" (physical form) God prepared for Himself. You could accurately read the New Testament like this ...

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten BODY, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Matthew 16:16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the BODY of the living God.

John 1:34 And I saw, and bare record that this is the BODY of God.

The reason the Bible uses the words "Father" and "Son" in describing redemption is that these words convey RELATIONSHIP. It is not relationship between "parts of God" that is conveyed, because God is ONE. Rather, redemption is described this way for OUR benefit – so WE can understand the great sacrifice God made on our behalf.

In other words, God is all-powerful – but He is also a person! We are made in His image, so we can understand how He feels. He didn't want us to think about Calvary in abstract, theological terms ... that's why Calvary is about a FATHER sacrificing His SON for sinners who don't even care ... EVEN WHEN YOU'RE GOD, THAT HURTS!

ILLUSTRATION: Video clip from "MOST" movie

MOST (Czech for "Bridge") tells the story of the close relationship between a bridge operator and his young son, and the fateful day when both of them try to head off an impending rail disaster. A steam train full of hundreds of passengers is heading toward an open drawbridge, and the people onboard are totally oblivious to the impending disaster. Then, the father makes an unthinkable sacrifice to save their lives ...

Romans 5:6-8 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

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