



Last week, during the NBA finals, Dwayne Wade and LeBron James mocked Dirk Nowitzki, the star forward for the Dallas Mavericks, who had a cold and a hundred plus degree fever. As the two Miami Superstars saw some cameras, they began to pretend they had colds, telling everyone to watch them cough.

The media of course made it a big deal to sports fans worldwide. Everyone wanted to know Dirk's reaction. Would he get mad and say some harsh things about James and Wade? Would this motivate him even more to beat the Miami Heat? As the Dallas forward interviewed about the situation, he maintained such a display would not make him more motivated to defeat the Miami Heat. He said, this is the NBA finals, if that doesn't motivate you enough, then you're in the wrong business.

Nowitzki simply refused to let the mocking of the other team get him bent out of shape. His team eventually went on to win the NBA finals and he was the MVP of the series. What stands out about him is the way he reacted to the situation. In a similar way, Jesus cares how we react to people when they mock us, humiliate us, and even want to sue us. What he says is not popular as far as our culture is concerned—but he never cared about consensus, he cared about our hearts. He wanted us to get that part right.

**“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 the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.**

There are certain passages that do not resonate well with us and this is one of them. The primary reason, of course, is that these texts call us to do something that goes against our nature. At the very core of our being, we want people to pay for humiliating us, whether this happens actively or passively. It is hard for me to embrace this text for the simple reason it threatens my manhood. I do not like people getting the best of me, and worse, rubbing my face in it.

Each one of us responds differently when people attack our character. Some use harsh words as their weapon of retaliation. Then of course, there are those who say nothing, but inside they simmer wishing they would have taken more action. Replaying the scene in their mind over-and-over again, imagining how things would have turned out, had they responded more aggressively. Ultimately, each one of these responses showcases a heart that has not been tamed by Jesus.

In verse 38, Jesus begins to show us what a tamed heart should look like. He begins by quoting their current understanding, which essentially reveals that the punishment must fit the crime, no more, no less! For example, if a man struck a pregnant woman in the stomach, the Law stated, depending on what happened to the baby, determined whether a person was fined or they would be executed.

But on again, Jesus raises the bar to a higher standard. He essentially says if they slap you; let them slap you again. Maybe they did not get a good enough shot.

If you have ever watched *The Three Stooges* reruns, you are aware that they love to poke, slap, and hit each other. These kinds of shows are where we get the term slapstick comedy. The genre features exaggerated forms of violence that breaks the moral fibers of common sense. When one person grabs the others nose with

two knuckles and slaps down on their nose, and the other responds by poking his two fingers in the two eyes of the other, we laugh. It is classic. It is funny.

However, we would cease to laugh if eventually one never hit back. Jesus tells us not to hit back.

Now many have taken this principle and have ran with it and attached scenarios that go way beyond what Jesus is teaching. Some have used such a text to encourage battered wives to hang in there as they get repeatedly abused. Others have said, if someone tries to seriously injure you, you should not try to defend yourself. Still others have used this text to validate their belief that we should not go to war. I guess they want us to just except getting bombed. All of these examples are ludicrous and stretch the text way beyond what Jesus intended. The issue at hand, deals chiefly with a person who is being attacked for their for their character.

In the days of Jesus, a backhanded slap to the right side of the cheek was considered an insult, usually by a high-ranking official. There were times of course; Jesus also experienced these backhands in front of the high priest. But what he never wanted to do was exchange evil for evil.

That is why men like Paul the apostle said in Romans 12:19.

**19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." 20 To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.**

The problem with retaliation is that often it turns your heart to evil because the thought that consumes you is getting even by doing another harm. Jesus would rather you suffer than do harm to others. Turn the other cheek allows one the opportunity not to lose their witness. It is to overcome evil with good.

**if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.**

The principle here is that you should try to resolve issues without having to go to court and be a part of a lawsuit. If someone demands something of you,

**And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.**

**Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.**

What I learned today

0. You have a better chance of impacting a person if you do not retaliate
1. Retaliation extends the dispute