

THE BIG IDEA: Instead of taking revenge, offer redemption.

The Take-Off

Over the past 8 Sundays, we've tackled some pretty hard questions in our Asking For a Friend series

My guess is that you could relate to some more than others, and that's okay

But this last question is one that all of us can relate to because it's about relationships and we've all got those

"How can I be godly when people make me feel like the devil?"

It's a long question, but one that affects us all.

What do we do with difficult people?

One website I ran across has an answer - revenge!

Masters of Revenge will send an anonymous, untraceable text for about \$3 to any number you choose

You can write your own insult or use one of theirs. Some of the cleanest ones I could find were "The worst time in our relationship was when you were awake" or "Why don't you slip into something more comfortable - like a coma!"

For about \$6 they'll send a mean email and make it look like it came from someone else, or if you really want revenge, they'll build a website "dedicated to exposing, humiliating and crushing your Enemy" for \$318.

Some of you have already Googled the company!

In stark contrast to what Masters of Revenge offers, we find these words in Romans 12:9-21.

Sometimes we buy the lie that if we love Jesus more, people will be easier to deal with. But there will always be difficult people. The question today is how can we best represent Jesus and the gospel as we deal with them?

I'd like to suggest that when it comes to difficult people, **instead of taking revenge, offer redemption.**

It won't be easy, especially since some of the people who bring out the worst in us aren't bad people - they are friends, family, church members.

So, when we're dealing with difficult people or just dealing with people in difficult circumstances, here are 3 things that will help us remain godly:

1. Deal with the most difficult person first

- When we're dealing with difficult people, **deal with the most difficult person first**
- Let's be honest, many times we're the difficult ones, so let's start with ourselves
- Matt. 7:1-5** / get ourselves better in order to help others get better
- Why don't we do this? Because it's hard to see in ourselves what is easy to see in others.
- 2 Samuel 12:7** / David got mad at a man in a story, but Nathan told him, "You're the man!"
- Sometimes God uses the difficult people in our lives like a mirror to show us ourselves
- Psalms 139:23-24** is a great place to start when we're dealing with difficult people

2. Don't try to change them; try to understand them

- Once we allow the Holy Spirit to peek into our own hearts and motivation, it's easier to practice this second guideline: **don't try to change them; try to understand them**
- Sometimes I think we try to bully difficult people into doing or acting the way we want or think they should
- But that wasn't the way Jesus dealt with difficult people
- Mark 11:29-30** / In another showdown with difficult religious leaders, Jesus didn't push or bully
- He asked a question; He sought to understand them
- Want to be more godly in difficult relationships? Learn to investigate instead of interrogate.
- Always ask what's the "thing behind the thing" in the situation?
- "Who peed in your Rice Krispies?"

3. Be a vessel, not a victim

- Perhaps the hardest of the three guidelines is based on the last 5 verses in Romans 12
- How can we keep ourselves from seeking the revenge - the payback - that seems to come so naturally?
- Be a vessel, not a victim.**
- Victims retaliate. Vessels reallocate.**
- 1 Peter 3:9** / God doesn't call us to simply not repay evil with evil, but to repay evil with blessing
- How? By remembering what Jesus did for us.

- g. **Ephesians 4:32** / we forgive as we were forgiven
- h. How were we forgiven?
- i. **Romans 5:8** / when we were enemies

The Landing

When we offer redemption instead of taking revenge, Romans 12:19 says that we leave room for God's wrath
That sounds bad, but ultimately it means that our response to difficult people can help point them to the cross because
that's where God's wrath was satisfied
When we take revenge, we give to others what they gave to us
When we offer redemption, we reallocate to others what God gave to us
Let's pray