

## Turning the other cheek

To “turn the other cheek” doesn’t mean you can’t duck. Jesus walked away from abuse on a number of occasions. Other times, he forcefully caused his opponents to back away. And at his arrest, he made very sure that his disciples were protected. If your Jesus is a wimpy Jesus, you don’t know the real one. Jesus Christ is the most forceful man you could ever meet. He was very rough with hypocrites and oppressors. Yet, for sin-sick souls, He could be extremely gentle. “A bruised reed he will not break,” the Scriptures said of Him.

Jesus taught His disciples that life in the kingdom of God is very different from worldly life. He is true reality and life with Him is the life of heaven now. Anger, contempt, lust, manipulation, and personal vengeance simply have no place as we live with Him. When Jesus taught us to “turn the other cheek,” and to “go the second mile,” He was instructing His disciples to remain loving to everyone, no matter what. He was not saying you cannot defend yourself, either in court or physically, nor was He teaching pacifism. While I would hate to use lethal force, if it was a choice between my family and someone attacking us, I wouldn’t hesitate. If you love your family, how could you not protect them?

When He taught us to “turn the other cheek,” Jesus is teaching us our response to the insults, slights, snubs, offenses, and rejections we encounter on a daily basis. It is in our families, at work, and at church (!!) that we practice “turning the other cheek.” The worldly response is to insult right back or avoid the offender. No, Jesus teaches us to stand our ground (not run away and yes, confront the bad behavior in love, but keep standing) and to remain loving. I listened to a sermon by Kenneth E. Hagin recently. He said, “I choose to walk in love, no matter if anyone else does or not!” Amen to that. That must be our attitude, of course, if we would follow Jesus. If you don’t want to follow Jesus, that’s your business. There will be hell to pay—but again, that’s your choice. But if you are going to follow Jesus, you sign-on with the agreement that you walk in love towards everyone, not just those who are pleasant, but towards those who are mean.

Can we agree that if we have received Jesus Christ as our savior and Lord, then the Word says that the “love of God has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit”? (Rom 5:5) That means that God’s kind of love is now within us. Love is not “feelings;” it is the will to seek the good of others. We ask ourselves, “If I did love this person, what would I do?” Then, we do that. The Holy Spirit will not do it for us – but He will assist us as we step out in faith and obedience.