

# 1 Peter “Walk the Talk”

## GROW Study: Session 4

### Life Fellowship Church

#### Session 4: Refuse to Get Revenge

**Theme:** If you refuse to become consumed with the idea of revenge, and instead become consumed with forgiveness, you will experience the grace of God in a powerful way.

First Peter 2 will help you make the transition from wanting to get even to being willing to forgive.

**Scripture Reference:** 1 Peter 2: 19-25

**Teaching Points:** Examination of 3 things that lead to forgiveness:

Why it's best not to seek revenge..

What to do instead of seeking revenge..

How to get your mind off of seeking revenge..

#### **Scripture – NIV**

**1 Peter 2:19–25** <sup>19</sup>For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. <sup>20</sup>But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. <sup>21</sup>To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

<sup>22</sup>“He committed no sin,  
and no deceit was found in his mouth.”<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>23</sup>When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. <sup>24</sup>He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. <sup>25</sup>For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. **Footnotes:** a. 1 Peter 2:22 Isaiah 53:9

#### ▶ 1. Identify the Current Issue

- ***In February 1990, the Los Angeles County Bomb Squad received a call about a suspicious pickup truck parked in downtown LA.***
- ***It's hard to believe the desire for revenge can become so strong that someone would destroy lives—including their own—in the quest for it. But it happens again and again.***
- ***When you become consumed with revenge, the particulars of the offense lose significance.***
- ***Discussion starters:***
  - ▶ Describe a book or movie that shows the consequences of seeking revenge.
  - ▶ Describe one that shows the freedom of forgiving instead of seeking revenge.

#### ▶ 2. Discover the Eternal Principles

- ***Teaching point 1: Refusing to seek revenge pleases God and helps you to identify with and be like Christ.***
  - Read 1 Peter 2:19–22. There are **three reasons** why it's **best not to seek revenge**.
  - ***Refusing revenge is pleasing to God.***
    - *Look at 1 Peter 2:19–22. if you refuse to get even, it will make God happy.*

- *The Bible makes it clear that God despises any of kind of mistreatment toward anyone. However, if you refuse to get even with those who take advantage of you, God is pleased with that attitude.*
- **It helps you identify with Christ.**
  - *No amount of mistreatment you or I will experience can compare with the supreme injustice experienced by Christ. On the human level, he was deceived, betrayed, beaten, mocked, and railroaded into a bogus trial where he was sentenced to death on a trumped-up charge. He had done nothing illegal, and yet he was sentenced to die. On the spiritual level, as he hung on the cross, every sin ever committed by you, me, or anyone else was placed upon him. He suffered the punishment for the sins of the world—and he did it willingly.*
  - *Maybe you can't heal people, feed 5,000 people with a small amount of fish and bread, or walk on water, but there is one way that you can be just like Jesus. When you are mistreated by anyone for any reason, you can refuse to get even. By doing that you are following in the steps of Christ (v. 21).*
- **It helps you become good. Read 1 Peter 3:14 and 4:1.**
  - *Enduring temptation is like holding a ten-pound weight over your head. If you're not used to it, the weight can get heavy quickly. Enduring mistreatment is much more difficult than enduring temptation—it's like holding a 25-pound weight over your head. The longer you hold it, the stronger you become; when you put down the 25-pound weight of suffering and pick up the ten pound weight of temptation, it seems light as a feather in comparison.*
  - *Nobody in their right mind would choose to be taken advantage of. In fact, you do everything you can to avoid it. But when it happens, you can benefit from it by pleasing God, identifying with Christ, and letting him use it to mold your character.*
- Why is it commendable if we bear up under the pain of unjust suffering (v. 19)? What would our attitude need to be like for this to be commendable?
  - **Note: If we bear up under it with a bitter attitude, it cannot please God. If we have an attitude like Christ's, it is commendable—the last part of verse 19 says "because he is conscious of God."**
  - *Have you ever had to suffer unjustly? What happened? How could you have a commendable attitude through that experience?*
    - *Why should we expect to suffer unjustly (v. 21)?*
    - *What do you think it means to follow in his steps (v. 21)?*
    - *What do these verses say about the American idea that we should fight for our rights?*
- Which of these statements best reflects what it means to not seek revenge?

- *I won't try to get back at others as long as they treat me right.*
- *I will take, without complaining, anything anyone dishes out to me.*
- *I will show grace, mercy, and kindness even to those who don't deserve it*
- *I won't do anything physical to someone who has hurt me, but I'll make them suffer emotionally.*
- *Why did you pick the statement you did? Which is the best statement? Why?*
- **Teaching point 2: Instead of seeking revenge, show kindness.**
  - There is a difference between getting revenge and taking the necessary steps to put an end to mistreatment. Refusing to get revenge doesn't mean that you refuse to hold others accountable for their actions—it simply means that **you refuse to retaliate.**
  - Read Acts 16:35–40. When Paul was in the city of Philippi, the authorities beat him and threw him in jail. The next day they offered to set him free and asked him to “Go in peace.”
  - Paul said basically, “Not so fast. They beat us publicly without a trial, and we're Roman citizens. They can't sweep this under the rug.”
  - You don't have to be a floor mat for others to trample on. You can set boundaries for yourself Getting revenge is when you try to hurt them as much as (or more than) they hurt you.
  - Instead of getting revenge, this is what you need to do.
    1. ***Do not retaliate. Read 1 Peter 2:23. There's no such thing as getting even. You can't balance the scales, and your actions will serve only to extend the conflict. Read what Jesus taught in Matthew 5:38–48.***
    2. ***Do not talk trash. 1 Peter 2:23 says, “...when he suffered he made no threats.”***
    3. ***Put yourself in God's hands. Read 1 Peter 2:23. God is a God of justice. In fact, Isaiah said, “He will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth” (Isaiah 42:4). God stated in his Word that he will balance the scales. He will do it much more fairly than you or I could ever hope to do. Read Romans 12:19.***
    4. ***Do something kind for the one who has hurt you.***
      - ***Read Romans 12:20.***
        - ***If you get revenge on your enemy, you may succeed in knocking him off his feet. However, if you forgive him and return kindness instead, you just might drive him to his knees.***
        - *When Jesus was dying on the cross, his response was,*  
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        - *When someone mistreats you, your response is*  
\_\_\_\_\_
        - *Questions*

*Why do we have such a strong desire to get even with someone who wrongs us?*

*Why is talking badly about the one who wronged us so satisfying? When is it valid to talk about the person and when does it cross over into sin?*

*Note: Sometimes we will need to talk about it with a mature Christian to process it and gain understanding. It turns into sin when we just want to hurt the other person.*

*How can you learn to put yourself in God's hands instead of seeking revenge on your own? Suggest practical ways?*

*How can you change your attitude enough to do something kind for the one who hurt you? Has anyone ever done this for you? If so, how did it make you feel?*

- **Teaching point 3: Instead of seeking revenge, forgive.**
  - How do you get your mind off seeking revenge?
  - How do you get rid of the desire to get revenge? One way is to say three words to yourself: **I am forgiven.**
    - *Only when we come to grips with our own need for forgiveness that we are able to forgive others.*
  - Read 1 Peter 2:24–25
    - After Peter tells his readers why it's best not to seek revenge, he reminds them that they, the ones who are struggling with mistreatment, have been forgiven by God.
  - There is a saying that hurt people hurt people.
    - People tend to become consumed with it. Their pain often expresses itself in hostility toward the rest of the world. They become bitter, jaded, non-trusting, and distant.
  - Instead of focusing on unjust suffering, remind yourself that you, too, are in need of God's forgiveness
    - The more you dwell on God's forgiveness, the easier it will be to forgive others—whether they ask for it or not.
- ▶ Questions
  - *What difference does it make to you that your sins are forgiven?*
  - *How does dwelling on what Christ did for you help you to forgive others?*

- *What does it mean to die to sins and live for righteousness (v. 24)? Why do we need to do that if we have been forgiven for our sins by Christ's death on the cross?*
  - ***Note: Although our sins have been forgiven because of Christ's work on the cross, we still need to confess our sin daily and choose to live righteously so as to not make a mockery of what Christ did for us.***
- *How were you healed by Christ's wounds (v. 24)? Give practical examples.*
- *How does Christ shepherd you on a daily basis (v. 25)?*

▶ **Apply Your Findings**

- ***Chuck Colson story***
- ***It can be argued that this man doesn't deserve forgiveness, and that she has every right not to forgive. But once she offered her forgiveness for the unjust suffering she had been subjected to, God began to work miracles.***

**Revenge – Biblical References**

1. Forbidden by our Lord. Le 19:18; Pr 24:17,29; Mt 5:39-41; Ro 12:17,19; 1Th 5:15; 1Pe 3:9.
2. Christ an example of forbearing. Isa 53:7; 1Pe 2:23.
3. Rebuked by Christ. Lu 9:54,55.
4. Inconsistent with Christian spirit. Lu 9:55.
5. Proceeds from a spiteful heart. Eze 25:15.
6. Instead of taking, we should
  - a. Trust in God. Pr 20:22; Ro 12:16.
  - b. Exhibit love. Le 19:18; Lu 6:35.
  - c. Give place to wrath. Ro 12:19.
  - d. Exercise forbearance. Mt 5:38-41.
  - e. Bless. Ro 12:14.
  - f. Overcome others by kindness. Pr 25:21,22; Ro 12:20.
7. Keep others from taking. 1Sa 24:10; 25:24-31; 26:9.
8. Be thankful for being kept from taking. 1Sa 25:32,33.
9. The wicked are earnest after. Jer 20:10.
10. Punishment for. Eze 25:15-17; Am 1:11,12.
11. Exemplified
  - a. Simon and Levi. Ge 34:25.
  - b. Samson. Jdj 15:7,8; 16:28-30.
  - c. Joab. 2Sa 3:27.
  - d. Absalom. 2Sa 13:23-29.
  - e. Jezebel. 1Ki 19:2.
  - f. Ahab. 1Ki 22:26.
  - g. Haman. Es 3:8-15.
  - h. Edomites. Eze 25:12.
  - i. Philistines. Eze 25:15.
  - j. Herodias. Mr 6:19-24.
  - k. James and John. Lu 9:54.
  - l. Chief priests. Ac 5:33.
  - m. M. Jews. Ac 7:54,59; 23:12.

## Revenge

- **Forbidden by our Lord.**
  - Leviticus 19:18 Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.
  - Proverbs 24:17 Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth:
  - Proverbs 24:29 Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work.
  
- **Christ an example of forbearing.**
  - Isaiah 53:7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.
  - 1 Peter 2:23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:
  
- **Rebuked by Christ.**
  - Luke 9:54-55 And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.
  
- **Inconsistent with Christian spirit.**
  - Luke 9:55 But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.
  
- **Proceeds from a spiteful heart.**
  - Ezekiel 25:15 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because the Philistines have dealt by revenge, and have taken vengeance with a despiteful heart, to destroy it for the old hatred;
  
- **INSTEAD OF TAKING, WE SHOULD**
  - Trust in God.
    - Proverbs 20:22 Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee.
    - Romans 12:16 Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.
  - Exhibit love.
    - Leviticus 19:18 Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.
    - Luke 6:35 But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.
  - Give place unto wrath.
    - Romans 12:19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.
  - Exercise forbearance.
    - Matthew 5:38-41 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. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

- Bless.
  - Romans 12:14 Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.
- Overcome others by kindness.
  - Proverbs 25:21-22 If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee.
- **Keep others from taking.**
  - 1 Samuel 24:10 Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the LORD had delivered thee to day into mine hand in the cave: and some bade me kill thee: but mine eye spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the LORD'S anointed.
  - 1 Samuel 25:24-31 And fell at his feet, and said, Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be: and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid. Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, even Nabal: for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him: but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send. Now therefore, my lord, as the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, seeing the LORD hath withholden thee from coming to shed blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand, now let thine enemies, and they that seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal. And now this blessing which thine handmaid hath brought unto my lord, let it even be given unto the young men that follow my lord. I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine handmaid: for the LORD will certainly make my lord a sure house; because my lord fighteth the battles of the LORD, and evil hath not been found in thee all thy days. ...
  - 1 Samuel 26:9 And David said to Abishai, Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the LORD'S anointed, and be guiltless?
- **Be thankful for being kept from taking.**
  - 1 Samuel 25:32-33 And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me: And blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand.
- **The wicked are earnest after.**
  - Jeremiah 20:10 For I heard the defaming of many, fear on every side. Report, say they, and we will report it. All my familiars watched for my halting, saying, Peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him.
- **Punishment for.**
  - Ezekiel 25:15-17 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because the Philistines have dealt by revenge, and have taken vengeance with a despiteful heart, to destroy it for the old hatred; Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will stretch out mine hand upon the Philistines, and I will cut off the Cherethims, and destroy the remnant of the sea coast. And I will execute great vengeance upon them with furious rebukes; and they shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall lay my vengeance upon them.
  - Amos 1:11-12 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever: But I will send a fire upon Teman, which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah.
- **Exemplified.**
  - Simon and Levi,

- Genesis 34:25 And it came to pass on the third day, when they were sore, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brethren, took each man his sword, and came upon the city boldly, and slew all the males.
- Samson
  - Judges 15:7 And Samson said unto them, Though ye have done this, yet will I be avenged of you, and after that I will cease.
  - Judges 16:28-30 And Samson called unto the LORD, and said, O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes. And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left. And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life.
- Joab
  - 2 Samuel 3:27 And when Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him quietly, and smote him there under the fifth rib, that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother.
- Absalom
  - 2 Samuel 13:23-29 And it came to pass after two full years, that Absalom had sheepshearers in Baalhazor, which is beside Ephraim: and Absalom invited all the king's sons. And Absalom came to the king, and said, Behold now, thy servant hath sheepshearers; let the king, I beseech thee, and his servants go with thy servant. And the king said to Absalom, Nay, my son, let us not all now go, lest we be chargeable unto thee. And he pressed him: howbeit he would not go, but blessed him. Then said Absalom, If not, I pray thee, let my brother Amnon go with us. And the king said unto him, Why should he go with thee? But Absalom pressed him, that he let Amnon and all the king's sons go with him. ...
- Jezebel
  - 1 Kings 19:2 Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to morrow about this time.
- Ahab
  - 1 Kings 22:26 And the king of Israel said, Take Micaiah, and carry him back unto Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son;
- Haman
  - Esther 3:8-15 And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws: therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them. If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed: and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those that have the charge of the business, to bring it into the king's treasuries. And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews' enemy. And the king said unto Haman, The silver is given to thee, the people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee. Then were the king's scribes called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and there was written according to all that Haman had commanded unto the king's lieutenants, and to the governors that were over every province, and to the rulers of every people of every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language; in the name of king Ahasuerus was it written, and sealed with the king's ring. ...

- Edomites
  - Ezekiel 25:12 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because that Edom hath dealt against the house of Judah by taking vengeance, and hath greatly offended, and revenged himself upon them;
- Philistines
  - Ezekiel 25:15 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because the Philistines have dealt by revenge, and have taken vengeance with a despiteful heart, to destroy it for the old hatred;
- Herodias
  - Mark 6:19-24 Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not: For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly. And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee; And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom. ...
- James and John
  - Luke 9:54 And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?
- Chief priests
  - Acts 5:33 When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them.
- Jews
  - Acts 7:54 When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.
  - Acts 23:12 And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.

**Question: "What does the Bible say about revenge?"**

Answer: The Bible has a great deal to say about revenge. Both the Hebrew and Greek words translated "vengeance," "revenge," and "avenge" have as their root meaning the idea of punishment. This is crucial in understanding why God reserves for Himself the right to avenge.

The key verse regarding this truth is found in the Old Testament and quoted twice in the New Testament. God said: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay. In due time their foot will slip; their day of disaster is near and their doom rushes upon them" (Deuteronomy 32:35; Romans 12:19; Hebrews 10:30). In Deuteronomy, God is speaking of the stiff-necked, rebellious, idolatrous Israelites who rejected Him and incurred His wrath with their wickedness. He promised to avenge Himself upon them in His own timing and according to His own perfect and pure motives. The two New Testament passages concern the behavior of the Christian, who is not to usurp God's authority. Rather, we are to allow Him to judge rightly and pour out His divine retribution against His enemies as He sees fit.

Unlike us, God never takes vengeance from impure motives. His vengeance is for the purpose of punishing those who have offended and rejected Him. We can, however, pray for God to avenge Himself in perfection and holiness against His enemies and to avenge those who are oppressed by evil. In Psalm 94:1, the psalmist prays for God to avenge the righteous, not out of a sense of uncontrolled

vindictiveness, but out of just retribution from the eternal Judge whose judgments are perfect. Even when the innocent suffer and the wicked appear to prosper, it is for God alone to punish. “The LORD is a jealous and avenging God; the LORD takes vengeance and is filled with wrath. The LORD takes vengeance on his foes and maintains his wrath against his enemies” (Nahum 1:2).

There are only two times in the Bible when God gives men permission to avenge in His name. First, after committing hideous, violent acts against the Israelites, the cup of God’s wrath against the Midianites was full, and He commanded Moses to lead the people in a holy war against them. “The LORD said to Moses, ‘Take vengeance on the Midianites for the Israelites. After that, you will be gathered to your people’” (Numbers 31:1-2). Here again, Moses did not act on his own; he was merely an instrument to carry out God’s perfect plan under His guidance and instruction. Second, Christians are to be in submission to the rulers God has set over us because they are His instruments for “vengeance on evildoers” (1 Peter 2:13-14). As in Moses’ case, these rulers are not to act on their own, but are to carry out God’s will for the punishment of the wicked.

It is tempting to try to take on the role of God and seek to punish those who we feel deserve it. But because we are sinful creatures, it is impossible for us to take revenge with pure motives. This is why the Mosaic Law contains the command: “Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD” (Leviticus. 19:18). Even David, a “man after God’s own heart” (1 Samuel 13:14), refused to take revenge on Saul, even though David was the innocent party being wronged. David submitted to God’s command to forego vengeance and trust in Him: “May the LORD judge between you and me. And may the LORD avenge the wrongs you have done to me, but my hand will not touch you (1 Samuel 24:12).

As Christians, we are to follow the Lord Jesus’ command to “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:44), leaving the vengeance to God.

Recommended Resource: Perspectives on War in the Bible by John Wood.