

ALIGN__5

Overcome the Evil Aimed at You

**Don't allow yourself to be
overpowered by evil.
Take the offensive—
overpower evil with good!
- Romans 12:21, Phillips**

**You have heard that it was
said, 'Love your neighbors
and hate your enemies.'
But I say to you,
love your enemies.
Pray for those who hurt you.
— Matthew 5:43-44, New Century**

Has anyone ever betrayed you, slandered you, or stolen from you? In other words, have you ever been on the receiving end of a raw deal? One of the acid tests of being a Christ-follower has to do with the way in which you respond to being wronged. You'll never be more like Jesus than when you give people what they need, rather than what they deserve.

Welcome

Some people seem to take the adage to heart, "*Why be difficult, when with a little more effort, you can be impossible?*" Have you had a difficult person in your life? Don't reveal their name, but share a few details.

Word

Read Romans 12:14-21

1. Verse 21 is foundational to the entire passage, "Don't let evil *get the best* of you; *get the best* of evil by doing good." Notice the "godly aggression" toward those who've done you wrong. As a Christ-follower it isn't enough to go on the defensive, you're called to actually go on the offensive (notice Matthew 5:38-48)! What's the difference between the two approaches? What have you found most helpful in maintaining this critical perspective?
2. This passage provides practical instruction about learning to respond rather than react to difficult people. It shouldn't be surprising that the first statement has to do with the way in which we use our mouths (vs 14). Are you known more for your *blessings* or your *blasts*? What are the various ways in which one might "curse" another person? By contrast, what does it mean to "bless" someone?
3. Verses 15-16 have to do with learning to empathize with others. Why is "understanding" or acknowledging someone's thought process or emotions so important, particularly in a conflicted situation?
4. The phrase, "*be careful to do what is right*" (verse 17), literally means "to take thought beforehand" or "to consider in advance." It could be taken *negatively*—for example, "Don't push their buttons!" It could also be taken *positively* in the sense of being more attentive to someone's needs. Which of the two do you find more difficult? Explain.
5. When you're on the receiving end of a raw deal, it's easy to rehearse your hurts, but this only leads to resentment. What's the problem with taking revenge or harboring resentment? What reasons are given in this passage for not taking revenge?

Works

Are you going to live your life as a reaction to people, or as a reflection of God? In what way have you been challenged most by this passage? What attitude re-alignment do you need to make this week?

Worship

God always stays on the offensive—determined to do that which is in our best interests (i.e., Romans 5:6-8). "I Stand Amazed" (147), "Boundless Love" (325), "There is a Redeemer" (287).