

the Venues

Go Deep

Summer Blockbusters

Marvel's The Avengers

"How *Not* to be an Avenger"

July 27, 2014

Avenger: (*n*) One who vindicates or takes vengeance; one who inflicts punishment in retaliation for harm done to someone else.

Matthew 5:38-41

³⁸ "You have heard the law that says the punishment must match the injury: 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' ³⁹ But I say, do not resist an evil person! If someone slaps you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also. ⁴⁰ If you're sued in court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too. ⁴¹ If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles."

Jesus teaches us that retribution – vengeance – is the rule of the old Law, but not the way of his new Kingdom.

Why do you think it was important for Jesus to make that distinction? Do you think these words still matter today?

Philemon is the story of two of Paul's friends. He's got a good relationship with each of them, but they are at odds with each other. Do you have two friends like that now, or have you ever in the past?

Philemon is a wealthy land owner who also has servants – or slaves. One of them, Onesimus, steals from him and runs off to Rome where he meets Paul. Paul encourages him to go back to Philemon to make things right and sends this letter with him to smooth things out.

Rather than choose sides and try to Avenge, Paul uses his influence to reconcile this relationship. In Philemon we see 3 Steps to Reconcile Others and *NOT* be an Avenger.

#1 Get In The Middle

Read Philemon 8-9, and 12

1. Getting in the middle allows us to
Defuse the Situation
2. Getting in the middle allows us to
Refuse to Take Sides

How do we balance “getting in the middle” and “minding our own business” when we see two friends fighting?

#2 Focus On The Positive

Read Philemon 4-7, and 10-11

It's so easy to judge others. Here are some things that can help us get past that quick reaction.

- Assume the best about people
- Give people the benefit of the doubt
- Lead with questions instead of accusations
- See others as the Image of God

What are some other ways we can focus on the positive and downplay the negative?

#3 Point them to God

Read Philemon 15-16

Our job is to point them to God, reminding them of that one relationship from which all other relationships are grounded. Then, God will do the work of reconciliation.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

How are we “ministers of reconciliation”?

Do you feel like God has perfectly positioned you to help with the reconciliation of a relationship gone bad? How do you think you can be that “minister of reconciliation” in that particular situation?