

Turning the Other Cheek

Question:

In the “Sermon on the Mount,” what did Jesus mean when He taught His followers to “turn the other cheek” (Mt 5:39; Lk 6:29)?

Our Answer:

Jesus’ words were in stark contrast to the traditional thought concerning retribution: “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” (Ex 21:24; Lev 24:20; Dt 19:21). When Jesus indicated that a person should turn the other cheek, He was discussing returning good for evil, not endorsing pacifism. The point Jesus was making was that His followers should adopt an attitude of compassion, as opposed to expecting to be vindicated for their losses. It is clear that Jesus lived by these words (Mt 27:26, 30; Lk 23:34; 1Pe 2:23).