

“Love your enemies.” Matthew chapter 5 verse 44

It is commonly claimed that religion has caused more wars than any other thing in all of history. Actually that's not true. Statistically, religion only accounts for a very small percentage of conflicts throughout our history.

It is people who cause conflict, not faiths, ideologies, political philosophies or theories. Most of these things are genuinely intended to make life better for people. But they invariably become corrupted by greed and the lust for power and domination. People attempt to impose them on others, and when two or more such ideologies clash, then you have conflict.

It is true that this has happened numerous times in the history of the Christian faith, and even between different denominations of Christianity and some of those conflicts have been particularly brutal. The writer C S Lewis once suggested that, because faith is capable of the greatest good, when it is corrupted it is also capable of the greatest evil.

But the New Testament is very clear about what the attitude of a disciple of Christ must be towards his or her enemies. We are to love them. If they take your tunic, give them you cloak, too, pray for them and bless them, do not repay evil with evil, but repay evil with good, leave room for God's judgment, if someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other to him, too.

None of this implies that Christians are to be passive, compliant walkovers, only that we are to be peacemakers who break the destructive cycle of hurt, conflict and revenge with forbearance and forgiveness. Clearly, this requires maturity, wisdom and strength, and implies that we are to find answers other than retaliation and punishment for the wrongs that people do to us.

Prayer

Father, the world lives in conflict and contention, and all around us we see the result. Thank you that there is a better way, which calls me to relinquish my demand that I have my way and that people should pay when I feel they have wronged me. Thank you that we, your disciples, have this to offer the world. Please teach me humility and meekness, and also the strength, maturity and wisdom to deal with conflicts in the way you teach me. In Jesus' name, amen.

*All these devotionals can be found on our website [inghamitechurch.org](http://inghamitechurch.org) on the 'Resources' page. Click on the link to go there.*