

## Getting Even

I grew up watching major league baseball. Over the years there have been pitchers who intentionally threw at hitters, sometimes at their head. If a batter feared getting hit by a 90+ mile an hour fastball they wouldn't dig into the batter's box as firmly and would be much less effective as a hitter. It was a conscious decision by the pitcher to intimidate and gain an unfair advantage over the batter. The result often starts a "war." I have seen batters charge the mound, bat in hand, ready to retaliate. Sometimes both teams would rush out onto the field, angry and ready for a fight. Once order was restored, several innings later a batter from the opposing team would often get hit by a pitch. The objective was to "get even" or to "send a message." As a soccer official I often see something similar on the field. A hard foul early in the game often resulted in a retaliatory hard foul by the opposing team later. In both analogies anger took precedence over self-control and became a premediated attack on another person.



How do you deal with your anger because of something done to you? Do you feel self-righteous? In reality, the person who feels they were wronged often gets the mistaken notion that they are superior to the other person -- that you are "not as bad" as the other guy. Now you want the other person to "get what they deserve." Is that how God would like you to feel? Acts of retaliation are proof you are a sinner, too. You were just waiting for the right opportunity to strike back. The retaliatory act of vengeance is feeling that you have a right to inflict pain or insult on the other. Even taking a non-violent approach by bragging "I would never do that to someone else" is perceived by God being judgmental. Only God knows what is in the heart of each person, so only He has the right to judge people. Since God is sinless He only can truly say He would never do that. If a true wrong has been done to you God will avenge it. You don't have to.

The attitude of "I'll show him..." does just that. It shows God and everyone else that you also are a sinner. And, you waste the energy spent defending your ego when you could have directed the effort towards solving the problem in a positive way. Handling the situation in a loving way achieves much different results. "Love refuses to pay back and deliberately seeks to put the other person in the best light. It seeks to put their needs ahead of your own, all in the interest of helping the person change, if possible" (quote from God's Wisdom for Navigating Life, by Tim Keller). That is what God would want you to do.

You can't stay angry with someone without feeling superior to them. Fortunately, God doesn't seek to "get even" with us. Thankfully, He doesn't give us what we deserve. If God paid you back for what you have done to Him, what kind of life would you have?

**Question:** How do you handle situations when you feel you have been wronged by someone else?

### The Bible says:

- *Do not say, "I'll pay you back for this wrong!" Wait for the LORD, and he will avenge you (Proverbs 20:22)*
- *Hatred stirs up conflict, but love covers all wrongs ... Fools show their annoyance at once, but the prudent overlook an insult (Proverbs 10:12, 12:16).*

**Prayer:** Father, you pour out your anger against sin and evil, not against people. Help me to have a more gracious spirit that overlooks slights and puts other in the best possible light. Amen.