

VENGEANCE

*Do not say, "I will repay evil";
Wait for the LORD, and He will save you
(Proverbs 20:22).*

In a world full of people with sin natures, sooner or later someone is going to hurt you, wrong you, humiliate you, take advantage of you, drag your good name through the mud—and you're going to feel like getting even. What should you do in times like this? Let me offer some suggestions from the Bible.

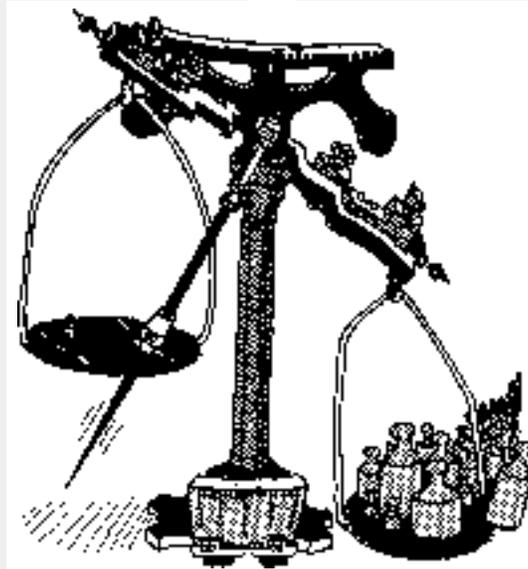
1) Don't avenge yourself (Lev. 19:18; Prov. 20:22; 24:29; Rom. 12:17, 19). God has promised to do it for you (Deut. 32:35; Rom. 12:19). Claim this promise: "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay (them)," says the Lord" (Rom. 12:19). Why is revenge prohibited? Because vengeance must be based on justice, and God is the only one who can repay injustices fairly. We're too emotionally involved to be fair (Prov. 6:34–35; Exod. 2:11–15; Acts 7:23–29). Besides, we don't know all the facts.

2) You have a right to be angry—God is (Rom. 12:19). That's righteous indignation (Eph. 4:26; cf. John 2:14–16). Justice has been violated. The greater your sense of justice, the greater your righteous anger will be.

3) A desire for vengeance is not wrong. Vent your righteous anger to God in prayer, asking Him to avenge you (Psa. 109:1–13, 20; Jer. 11:18–23; 15:15; 18:18–23; 20:12; Rev. 6:9–11). These prayers are called imprecatory prayers.

4) Overlook the wrong if you can (Prov. 19:11; 1 Cor. 6:7).

5) If you can't overlook the wrong without harboring resentment, go to the person who wronged you and rebuke him in private (Lev. 19:17; Matt. 18:15; Luke 17:3). If he apologizes and makes amends, forgive him (Matt. 6:14–15; 18:21–35; Luke 17:3–4; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13) and don't hold a grudge (Lev. 19:18). Be careful! Righteous anger can lead to sin (e.g., hatred, maligning, retaliation). So don't incur sin because of him (Lev. 19:17). How should you rebuke him? As David did (1 Sam. 24:12–15). Point out the wrong. Tell him, "The Lord will avenge me!" Or, "The Lord judge between you and me!"



6) Love him as you love yourself (Lev. 19:18; Matt. 5:44). If he's hungry, feed him; if he's thirsty, give him some water (Prov. 25:21; Rom. 12:20–21). Look for opportunities to love him by supplying his needs. That heaps coals of fire upon his head (Prov. 25:22; Rom. 12:20). And don't forget to pray for him (Matt. 5:44–45).

7) Wait for God to avenge you. He decides how and when (Prov. 20:22; Rev. 6:9–11).

It's interesting that you can love your enemies, pray for them, do things to supply their needs, and at the same time have righteous indignation toward them, rebuke them, and pray to God to avenge you. Loving those who hurt you and supplying their needs is the last thing most people want to do. They want revenge. But when you love them and refuse to seek your own revenge, God is glorified. Why? Because it demonstrates to them and to others that obeying God's commands is more important to you than your own personal feelings. Now that's a powerful witness!