

## **Healthy Banter**

### **Ready:**

“Not paying back evil for evil or insult for insult but, on the contrary, giving a blessing, since you were called for this, so that you may inherit a blessing.” – 1 Peter 3:9

### **Set**

Everyone loves a good old-fashioned cross-town rivalry. A few key elements are required for this rivalry to exist.

First, the teams must be competitive with one another; no one wants to see a blowout year after year. Second, the history between the two teams is critical. Perhaps they were the first two high schools established in your town and have been competing against each other for generations.

Often, where rivalries go wrong is in the banter between the teams. Instead of showing respect for their opponent through their banter, the banter starts to be degrading and disrespectful. This can quickly spiral into retaliation of higher and higher magnitude each year. This ‘repaying evil for evil’ can quickly go from a healthy rivalry to an all-out cross-town war.

It is our human desire to fight back when something we love is under attack. As athletes, we take great pride in our team and school; we want to fight back if that gets attacked. Standing up or doing what is right is biblical. But fighting back to get the upper hand or inflict the same pain on another is not.

When angry, we often think with our flesh and desire to return the harm given to us with equal or greater force. What Scripture calls us to do is the exact opposite. Instead of seeing the evil done to you and throwing it back, we are called to bless those who do evil to us.

What would this look like?

To bless someone would be to not harm them in the way the world thinks you should. The world thought Jesus ought to have been born in a palace and used His army to fight against the injustice done to His people and save the day. What Jesus did instead was be born and placed in an animal trough, wander on foot from town to town, and share the love of God. He is not exactly the king everyone thought He would be.

The world says if someone hurts you, hurt them back. Scripture says if someone hurts you, bless them.

### **Go**

- What would it look like to bless your enemies?
- Have you ever acted out of the flesh? How did that feel afterward?
- Do you believe it is a weakness not to fight back?

## **Workout**

Matthew 5:39

Romans 12:10

## **Overtime**

“Lord God, our world tells us to fight back and hit even harder; You tell us to bless the ones who hurt us. Give us the courage to defy what the world expects from us and give us a heart that desires to bless all, even those who do not bless us. Amen.”



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