

Turn the Other Cheek

Jesus tells us to 'turn the other cheek'. What does he mean?

'If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.' (Mt 5:39)

With the young people standing face to face in pairs, lead them in this reflection on the words of Christ.

Set the Scene

If you were to hit your partner on the right cheek how would you do it?

They might try with their left hand but this is not permitted. In Jesus' time the left hand was only used for unclean tasks.

The most effective way to strike the right cheek is a backhanded slap with the right hand.

The backhanded slap is how masters controlled their slaves, mothers their children and husbands their wives. It shows them they are inferior and powerless.

Challenge Injustice

Jesus tells the powerless to turn the other cheek. How would you hit your partner on the left cheek?

It's impossible with the back of your right hand!
The only way is with a fist or slap – and that is how equals fight. You lose your position of power.

The one who started with all the power is forced to back down. The victim, by offering the other cheek, has taken control, asserted his or her own dignity, refused to be humiliated, challenged oppression, and demanded to be treated as an equal.

Our Call

This is nonviolence: to challenge injustice and to deal with conflict creatively without resorting to violence. Jesus' call to us is revolutionary.

For more on Christian nonviolence see St Ethelburga's stethelburgas.org/themes/youth-refusing-violence