

THE PROBLEM WITH REVENGE

Lewis B. Smedes

The problem with revenge is that it never gets what it wants; it never evens the score. Fairness never comes. The chain reaction set off by every act of vengeance always takes its unhindered course.

. . . Why do family feuds go on and on till everyone is dead—or gets too old and tired to fight? The reason is simple: no two people, no two families, ever weigh pain on the same scale. The pain a person causes me always feels heavier to me than it feels to the person who caused it. The pain I inflict on you always feels worse to you than it seems to me. . . .

. . . If you hurt me and I retaliate in kind, I may think that I have given you only what you deserve, not more. But you will feel it as a hurt that is too great for you to accept. Your passion for fairness will force you to retaliate against me, harder this time. Then it will be my turn. And will it ever stop?

An eye for an eye becomes a leg for a leg and, eventually, a life for a life. No matter what our weapons are—words, clubs, arrows, guns, bombs, nuclear missiles—revenge locks us into an escalation of violence. Gandhi was right, if we all live by “an eye for an eye” the whole world will be blind. The only way out is forgiveness.

#Lewis B. Smedes. *“Forgive and Forget.”* pp.168