



Assembly

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Domino effect

Aim:

- To recognise the domino effect of taking revenge
- To consider biblical advice about forgiveness and breaking the revenge cycle

Introduction

Domino Trails

Either set up a domino trail, and topple it, or show a video clip of a trail. (There are several on YouTube, for example <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GI10UjQPvXQ&feature=related>). Comment that the whole sequence of dominoes only started to fall because the first one was pushed. It is sometimes like that with human behaviour – someone does something, someone else reacts in revenge, the first person, or their supporters retaliate, etc. Everyone wants to react against a perceived wrong, without realising that perhaps that wrong was a reaction to something they had done previously.

Looking Deeper

Chain Reactions

The news recently has been dominated with stories about 'WikiLeaks', a web-site designed to release secret and sensitive diplomatic information. Some have heralded this as a good thing, allowing the public to know what is really going on, whereas others have been concerned about the lives that are put at risk when secret information is made public. Because of the controversy stirred up by the information being released, some companies have withdrawn their

services from the website, making it more difficult for WikiLeaks to operate. As a result, computer hackers have attacked Visa, Mastercard and Paypal, and threatened other companies who have stopped providing support for WikiLeaks.

Why did this chain of events start? Was it the fault of governments and large corporations acting with a lack of integrity? Was it the founder of WikiLeaks trying to divert attention from his own dubious life-style? And regardless of how it started, where will this so called 'Wiki-War' end? When will either side feel they are justified in letting go and not pursuing revenge?

In the musical 'The Fiddler on the Roof', one of the villagers justifies the right to take revenge by quoting 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth'. Tevye, the main character, replies, 'Very good. That way the whole world will be blind and toothless.' In other words, constant revenge taking leaves no winners in the end, only losers.

In the Bible, Jesus responded to the same quote by saying, "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you, don't stand up against an evil person. If someone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other cheek also. If someone wants to sue you in court and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. If someone forces you to go with him one mile, go with him two miles. If a person asks you for something, give it to him. Don't refuse to give to someone who wants to borrow from you. "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemies.' But I say to you, love your enemies. Pray for those who hurt you. If you do this, you will be true children of your Father in heaven." (This is taken from Matthew 5:38-45 in the New Testament section of the Bible)



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Reflection

Meekness – a sign of strength?

In a world where lack of retaliation is seen as a sign of weakness, Jesus' words are challenging. But which is harder – to react angrily when we are wronged, or to hold our tongues and say nothing? Which shows the greater strength of character? Jesus is not suggesting that his followers should be submissive 'doormats' for everyone to walk over – on other occasions he strongly supports by word and example the need to stand up for justice. However, he is saying that we can choose to forgive rather than to take revenge, so that we don't perpetuate the domino effect of getting your own back. He demonstrated this himself by praying for forgiveness for those who crucified him and who mocked him as he died.

Prayer

Lord, when I am wronged, my first reaction is anger and a desire for revenge. Please give me the strength of character to control my temper, to forgive and to stop the retaliation chain.

Amen

