

*BIBLE READING: Matthew 5:38-48*

American government tends to operate on the idea that self-defense is a natural right, and many agree. Dads teach their kids to stand up for themselves in a fight. Moms argue with referees at Saturday soccer games. What are our rights? The list starts with life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness, and ends somewhere around eye for eye and tooth for tooth.

When I moved to Idaho, I had to take a test to get an Idaho driver's license. I'd been driving for five years, but I was nervous about failing the test, so I spent hours memorizing the Idaho Driver's Manual. I remember a piece of wisdom I discovered in the section on 4-way stops. The manual explained how the sequence of turns takes place. And then I read these words at the top of the next page. "Right of way is something you give, not something you take." That day, I recognized the core message of peacemaking. It's a difficult message. It's a message we ignore at the peril of increased conflict.

Since that time I've pondered these questions: What about people who talk behind my back and slander my reputation? I should hold them up in love, noting their positive traits and building their reputations every time I get the chance. What about those who threaten or manipulate in order to get their way? As far as it is within my power, I must give them what they need, not what I think they deserve.

The only way to make peace, the only option for diffusing conflict is to refuse engagement. If they grasp, I let go. If they accuse, I refuse to argue my defense. When they break in, I make them welcome. Jesus lived and died this truth. I pray for courage to follow.

*SONG: May the Mind of Christ My Savior*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord Jesus, I want to follow your example. Help me seek peace.*

—Eric Muhr

(adapted from [www.barclaypress.com](http://www.barclaypress.com))

*BIBLE READING: Luke 10:25-37*

Idaho's 486-foot-high Perrine Bridge is one of the world's most-frequented sites for parachutists who jump from fixed objects. But on a summer day in 2008 Tamara Judkins and her daughter noticed as they drove by that the man "sobbing and leaning over the railing" didn't have a parachute.

Judkins recounted to the *Times News* of Twin Falls how she circled back, parked, and told her daughter to call for help. Then Judkins did something that none of the 20 or so bystanders had thought to do: "I took off towards him, wrapped my arms around him and held onto him."

Judkins tried to talk the man into coming into town with her for a cup of coffee. The gathering crowd just watched, "many of them snapping photos." Eventually, Twin Falls County sheriff's deputies were able to grab the man and pull him back over the railing.

When I first read about this incident, there was one detail I couldn't get out of my mind—those people in the crowd, watching and snapping photos. It reminded me of the parable of the good Samaritan.

This newspaper account—a parable for our age—illustrated that we are a society of gawkers and eavesdroppers. Suffering—a potential suicide, a televised hanging, tortured prisoners half a world away—too easily excites prurience instead of sympathy, leaving me to question my character (and my motives): Am I more likely to sacrifice for a neighbor in need? Or take pictures?

*SONG: The Servant Song*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, help me love my neighbors—the neighbor on my street, or the stranger you place in my path.*

—Eric Muhr  
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