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CEDARCREEKCHURCH

# I'm Still Bitter Over the World Series.

Monday, May 1, 2017

Rajai Davis stepped up to the plate, swung the bat, and crack! The ball sailed over the giant left field wall for a 2-run home run, tying the game. I couldn't believe it. The Indians had tied game 7 of the World Series in the bottom of the 8th inning. I screamed so hard I'm sure the neighbors thought a murder was taking place. It was so surreal. It wasn't long until the game was over. Indians' Michael Martinez hit a weak grounder to Kris Bryant who threw the ball to Anthony Rizzo to end the game. As a lifelong Indians fan, I can say that this game had my emotions running the gamut. I never had a problem with the Cubs. I loved their history and how they represent a classic baseball team. It wasn't until the end of this World Series that a deep-seated bitterness found a home in my heart. Every time I see a Cubs logo, or that "W" flag, I die a little on the inside. It's sad, and I know it. Whether it's with close friends (who happen to be Cubs fans) or running into a random stranger at the grocery store donning a Cubs hat, I can't help but feel angry at that team - and resentful toward the person.

In some ways, we can joke about resentment, but if we're honest, there are areas of our lives in which it manifests itself in an ugly way. This resentment can be toward a person, a group of people, an event, and more. We all - in some form or another - struggle with resentment. When it's not about a baseball team - when it's serious - we should treat it seriously.

What we often do is treat our resentment as something we simply have. We might think, *I'm just a bitter person, or, it's not much to worry about*, but the problem is if we don't deal with our resentment (our bitterness) it will inflict more and more harm to our souls.

This past weekend, Ben Snyder talked about the villain of resentment. He gave us a helpful definition of resentment: when we put the pain of the past on repeat.

He also gave us some tips on what to do with our resentment.

First, we need to **identify it**.

We have to admit that we are resentful in an area of our life. We can't just assume it's a brief moment of anger or negative feelings, resentment is something rooted deep in our self. As Ben talked about last weekend, we need to bring it into the light.

Next, we need to ask God to help us **deal with it**.

This begins with confession. When we recognize an area of resentment in our life, we must admit it to God by confessing it to him and asking him to help us deal with it. It might also be helpful to confess to those around you whom you trust.

If you are resentful toward a person, then part of dealing with it is taking it to them.

Jesus gives us step-by-step instructions on how to deal with situations like this in Matthew 18:15-20. We're going to dive into this more this week, but what's important is that Jesus tells us to go with them in private first to talk about it. If someone has offended you, which is typically the beginning of resentment, then you have to talk to them one-on-one about it.

Finally, we have to ask God to help us **heal from it**.

The author of Hebrews tells us in 12:15,

***Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many.***

As previously stated, bitterness is not something to ignore. It is dangerous. It not only harms us, but also the people around us. As the author of Hebrews says, it doesn't just hurt others, it actually corrupts them. It can infect their person as well. Our resentment doesn't just infect us, it infects those around us. While we give our own resentment a pass - because we think we can handle it - we're actually passing on the deadly disease of resentment to those we love.

What about you? Do you struggle with resentment in some area of your life? Are you harboring bitterness toward someone that you need to let go of?

How can you bring this bitterness into the light today, so that it doesn't corrupt those around you?

**Prayer:**

*Heavenly Father, thank you for your mercy and grace toward me. Help me to extend forgiveness and grace to the people that have offended me. I want to bring my resentment into the light so that you can help me deal with it and heal from it. I ask all this in Jesus' name, amen.*

This post was written by Andy Rectenwald, the Director of the LivingItOut Bible Study.

# The Unicorn Frappuccino

Tuesday, May 2, 2017

We live in a culture where everyone wants to be treated fairly. The issue though, is that very few people agree on what is “fair.” For instance, I had a friend who was quite offended recently because he was unable to get a Unicorn Frappuccino from Starbucks. He complained that Starbucks’ being sold out of the drink was “unfair,” especially since he was in line and saw the last two sold in front of his very eyes... to the same person! Who needs TWO Unicorn Frappes? The person who wants to have sugar problems, that’s who. I digress. My friend took it personally that Starbucks didn’t plan for its colorful, pixie dust sprinkled, taste of heaven drink to go viral.

Of course, my friend is merely a colorful example of what often happens on a larger, and more personal, scale in our lives. This past weekend, Ben Snyder discussed the villain of resentment. One way resentment grows in our lives is when we grow bitter about being treated unfairly (or when we *think* we are being treated unfairly -- not always the reality). The reason we think we’re treated unfairly is that in some way, shape, or form, we do not get what we think we deserve.

Anyone who has kids or has been around kids has heard the phrase, “That’s not fair!” Of course, parents respond with the intuitive and loving answer of, “Sorry kid, life isn’t fair.” It’s ironic, the same adults who in one breath tell their children “life isn’t fair” will, in the next breath, complain about being passed up for a promotion, having to pay too much for something, a vehicle breaking down, relational strife, or something else that seems... unfair! The breakdown is often that we **expect** life to work out a certain way, and when it doesn’t, we begin to project our frustration on the person or thing we view as being the cause of why our life did **not** work out that way. Once we have a person on whom we allow our frustration to settle, we begin to take things personally and allow a root of bitterness to take hold.

As we saw this past weekend from Hebrews 12:15, it is vital that we not allow a root of bitterness to take hold in our life. To help prevent resentment, we have to ask God to help us identify the root of bitterness, deal with it, and heal from it.

We discussed this yesterday, but briefly, we have to:

**Identify** the root of bitterness

**Deal** with the root of bitterness.

**Heal** from the root of bitterness.

The bigger the offense, the longer the healing process. There are some very serious issues that require help from someone to walk through the healing process. At the same time, we feel treated unfairly because we feel we were owed something we did not get. To begin to heal from those smaller, often daily “offenses,” it helps to remember the way God has dealt with us. Jesus has extended his grace to us by allowing us to have a relationship with him through his death on the cross. In a relationship with Christ, we find full love and joy now, as well as the promise of eternal life, neither of which we truly deserve. Grace is getting what we do not deserve. Due to our sin, we deserve a life and eternity separated from God.

Paul reminds us of this truth in Romans 6:23:

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.”

We need to live out the truth that God gave us what we did not deserve by dying on the cross for us. Now, that’s “not fair!” This should make us more loving and joy-filled people. It should help us get over being treated unfairly and help us realize the importance of grace and forgiveness.

In a resentful, bitter, and unforgiving world, the person who freely extends grace and forgiveness is a rare person who brings great joy to those around him/her. Perhaps those stuck in a bleak, dull, flavorless, “unfair” life can see that the one who is like Christ is like a sweet, colorful, delicious Unicorn Frappuccino.

In what areas of your life do you *feel* like you are being treated unfairly?

Who do you need to go and have a conversation with this week to keep from allowing a ‘root of bitterness’ to grow?

In what areas of your life have you begun to think you are owed something? How can you let that belief go and rest in God’s grace extended to you today?

**Prayer:**

*Dear Lord, you have been so good to me. You have poured your grace on me and given me what I don’t deserve, a relationship with you. Help me to let go of my preconceived notions of what I deserve from others. Grant me courage to have conversations with people where needed and then heal my heart as I move forward in your grace. Amen.*

This post was written by Alex Woody, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Daily Bible Study.

# When Your Bitterness Controls You.

Wednesday, May 3, 2017

One of my favorite movies growing up was “The Lion King.” I learned easily, like most kids, how to rewind the tape player. I used to rewind the movie multiple times just to watch some of my favorite scenes. In today’s world, it has been made easier than ever to be able to “rewind” a TV channel with one remote button. One thing I have realized is that as easy as it is to rewind a movie, I can be even quicker to rewind my memory.

Life doesn’t always seem fair. Life doesn’t always feel loving. When we have been hurt by a friend, a co-worker, a boss, a family member, or a peer, it’s not always easy to move on from that situation or from words that have left a sting. Depending on the circumstance or the person that hurt us, we can be so upset that we allow resentment to build into what can eventually block the great opportunities we have in front of us.

Resentment, bitterness, and anger have the dangerous potential to lead us to other sinful behaviors. In Ephesians, Paul warns us to not give the devil room to work in our lives. Ephesians 4:26-27 says, **“Don’t sin by letting anger control you. Don’t let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a foothold to the devil.”** When we hold onto anger and resentment toward others, we give the devil a foothold and the space to create more anger. Andy Stanley challenges us by saying, “Here’s a question every angry man and woman needs to consider: How long are you going to allow people you don’t even like -- people who are no longer in your life, maybe even people who aren’t even alive anymore -- to control your life? How long?”

So how can we keep resentment from building up inside of us? Paul continues giving instructions in Ephesians 4:32: **“Be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”** God doesn’t tell us that forgiveness and loving those who have hurt us is easy, but it is the solution to being set free from the pain and anger that holds us down and allows us to live a life after God’s heart.

Are there areas in your life that are holding resentment? If so, what do you need to do to let them go?

## Prayer:

*Dear God, thank you for being all powerful and for taking our darkness and turning it into light. Take the anger and bitterness that I have been hanging onto and help me to be transformed into an image of your grace and love. I trust you and thank you in advance for the work you are doing in me. Amen.*

This post was written by Rachel Marroquin, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Bible Study.

# Forgive Your Enemies. All of Them.

Thursday, May 4, 2017

Everyone has felt resentment at one time or another. Maybe you've have suffered traumatic wrongs. You may have had parents who were abusive toward you. You may have been wronged by a friend or co-worker. Our natural reaction to these situations is to feel resentment, anger, and bitterness toward the person who has wronged us. Often when we resent someone, we wish for them to experience pain, to "get what's coming to them." The Bible calls us to respond in a radically different way.

Proverbs 25:21-22 says, "If your enemies are hungry, give them food to eat. If they are thirsty, give them water to drink. You will heap burning coals of shame on their heads, and the Lord will reward you." Wow! That's a little different than our natural reaction. These instructions are so important that Paul repeats them in the New Testament in Romans 12:19-21.

It is easy to read these words and immediately question their direction: "How does God expect me to be nice to that person? Doesn't he understand what they did was wrong?!" Not only does God know every detail of your life and how others have treated you, but when Jesus was on earth, he experienced the hurt and shame and rejection and betrayal that everyday people experience. Jesus' purpose on earth was to provide salvation from sins like these. Jesus died on the cross for everyone and every sin.

How can we live out the actions described in Proverbs 25 and Romans 12? It starts by not sinning. Seeking actions of revenge is a sin. Wishing pain and misfortune on someone is a sin. We must humble ourselves and remember that everyone matters to God. God's love is not contingent on one's actions; it is unconditional. That might not make loving and serving someone any easier, but it puts life in perspective. Read Romans 12:19-21 below and think about how you can love and serve the person toward whom you feel resentment.

## **Romans 12:19-21**

<sup>19</sup>Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say,

"I will take revenge;  
I will pay them back,"  
says the Lord.

<sup>20</sup>Instead,

"If your enemies are hungry, feed them.  
If they are thirsty, give them something to drink.

In doing this, you will heap  
burning coals of shame on their heads.”

<sup>21</sup>Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good.

What surprised you most about Paul's words in Romans chapter 12? Why was it a surprise?

Who is someone you are feeling resentment toward today? What is causing those feelings?

When we are offended (hurt) by someone, we are to respond in love. The literal command is to serve them by meeting their needs. If an “enemy” of yours needs a favor, do it. How can you serve the person you identified above? What needs does he or she have that you could meet?

It is not easy to be kind to someone toward whom we harbor resentment. What is holding you back from meeting those needs? How might you benefit from putting your feelings of resentment aside and focusing on him or her by showing how individuals matter to God?

**Prayer:**

*Dear God, I confess my feelings of resentment toward (fill in the name of the person) because of (fill in the cause of those feelings). God, please give me the courage and love and strength to put those feelings aside and show love to this person. Thank you, God, for showing me your unconditional love even when I mess up and don't deserve it. Amen.*

This post was written by Kaye Althaus, a regular contributor of the LivingItOut Bible Study.



# When Forgiveness is Hard.

Friday, May 5, 2017

When was the last time you found forgiveness? Maybe you want to be forgiven, but are withholding forgiveness from somebody else. Withholding forgiveness leads to resentment!

As Christians, (TobyMac lyric):

Cause we all make mistakes sometimes,  
And we all stepped across that line,  
But nothing's sweeter than the day we find,  
Forgiveness, Forgiveness

Have you found it? If you need help, look at God - at his nature - at how he has forgiven all our sins. We should not withhold forgiveness from others. Resentment is not an option for a Christian. God's nature can be found in the fruit of the Holy Spirit! Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control are the fruits of the Spirit, the outpouring of the work of the Holy Spirit in us. The Spirit produces these character traits that are found in the nature of Christ. If the Spirit lives in us, we should bear these fruits. And resentment is not on the list.

But what does forgiveness look like?

Jesus not only taught frequently about forgiveness, he also demonstrated his own willingness to forgive.

Jesus forgave:

The paralytic lowered on a mat through a roof  
The woman caught in adultery  
The woman who anointed his feet in oil,  
Peter, for denying he knew Jesus  
The criminal on the cross  
The people who crucified him

Realizing how completely Christ has forgiven us should produce a free and generous attitude of forgiveness toward others.

But what is forgiveness?

It is defined as the action or process of forgiving or being forgiven, and to pardon or acquit of sins, acquittal.

In life, we have many relationships that have the potential to hurt us often in small, ongoing ways. Sometimes in trying to be good people, we brush these

hurts aside, thinking “I’m not a vindictive or overly sensitive person, these things shouldn’t bother me.” But they do. What is the impact of holding onto these resentments?

Do we hold back in our lives? Do we argue with people? Do we gossip? Of course, we do.

What does the Bible teach us about this?

### **Colossians 3:8, 12-13**

<sup>8</sup>But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language.

<sup>12</sup>Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. <sup>13</sup>Make allowance for each other’s faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.

Sometimes we shy away from forgiveness because we think it means forgetting, and that doesn’t feel right. Here’s one way to think about it: instead of feeling anger toward someone who has hurt us, think about the potential for good that resides within them. Forgiveness isn’t a sign of weakness, it’s a sign of strength!

But how many times should we forgive? We forgive, forgive, and forgive again.

Jesus taught the art of forgiveness. “Lord how many times should I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times? Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times but seventy times seven.” Does this mean we are to forgive 490 times exactly? Yes. And more! Many biblical scholars think that they were to forgive as often as they were sinned against. Their forgiveness was to know no limits, that is, it was to be eternal and timeless, which makes it holy.

### **Matthew 18:21-22**

<sup>21</sup>Then Peter came to him and asked, “Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?”

<sup>22</sup>“No, not seven times,” Jesus replied, “but seventy times seven!”

And Jesus taught us to pray about it, “and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us.”

### **Prayer:**

*Dear Heavenly Father, we pray that you will help those of us that withhold forgiveness. Help us to follow your example and forgive those who have sinned*

*against us, not seven times, but 490 times and beyond! Help us to love like you!  
Amen!*

*This post was written by Pam Haynam, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Bible Study.*