

HOPE
"Let it go!"
May 3, 2015

- Bitterness Poisons You (Job 18:4)
- Bitterness Poisons Other People (Hebrews 12:15)
- Bitterness Poisons Your Future (Job 21:23-25)

"Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, violent assertiveness and slander, along with all spitefulness."
Ephesians 4:31 (CJB)

How to let go of Bitterness
(Joseph / Genesis 37-50)

1. Realize letting-go is a process (And hard/emotional/painful)
 - Pretended not to know (42:7)
 - Harshly accused them of being spies (42:14)
 - Threw them in jail (42:17)
 - Began to weep (42:24)
 - Tied one up and Held him for ransom (42:25)
 - Tricked them into thinking they stole from Pharaoh (42:28)
 - Overcome with emotion (43:30a)
 - Broke down and wept (43:30b)
 - Tricked them into thinking they stole from him (Genesis 44:15)
 - "Could stand it no longer" (45:1)
 - "He broke down and wept" (45:2)
 - Wept with joy \ embraced each brother (45:14)

"Casting all your care upon Him; for He cares for you." 1 Peter 5:7 (KJV)

2. Own the reality that God is better at revenge than you are (Judah's story)

"Dear Friends, never avenge yourselves. Leave that to God, for He has said He will repay those who deserve it."
Romans 12:19 (LB)

Forgiveness doesn't diminish justice; it just entrusts it to God. -Max Lucado

3. Believe that good can come out of your pain (Joseph's hindsight)

"Joseph told them, "Don't be afraid of me. Am I God, to judge and punish you? As far as I am concerned, God turned into good what you meant for evil. He brought me to the high position I have today so I could save the lives of many people."
Genesis 50:19, 20 (NLT)

Shake It Off (Don't Buy the Lie)	Step up onto Truth (Truth-based Living)
RESENTMENT — I can't forgive...	<i>"I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength." Philipians 4:13</i>
FEAR — I'm afraid to let go...	<i>"God hasn't given me a spirit of fear but of power, love and a sound mind." 2 Timothy 1:7</i>
DOUBT — I don't want them to get away with it...	<i>"God... will repay those who deserve it." Romans 12:19</i>
INSECURITY — If I don't look out for myself, who will...?	<i>"Casting all your care upon Him; for He cares for you." 1 Peter 5:7</i>
CONFUSION — I lack wisdom and don't know what to do	<i>"God generously gives wisdom to those who ask Him for it." James 1:5</i>

Leadership Tip!

During this 6-week All Church Series be sure to give everyone a chance to experience all aspects of what it means to be in a Life Group. Have you planned a time to play yet? How is your group doing at authenticity? For impacting others, Week 6 will be completely geared around impacting others so you can hold off on this one if you want! Think through the four values and make a plan to involve all of them by the time the study is over.

HOPE - Let It Go**STARTER QUESTION:**

After thinking more about your goals from last week, how are you feeling now? Anything you want to change?

MAIN IDEA:

Pastor Hank kicks off week four looking at what can get in the way of hope in our lives. A few weeks ago we looked at worry, stress, and anxiety, and this week we are taking a different approach as we talk about bitterness, rage, and holding a grudge.

Important Note:

First let's start this discussion with an understanding that not everything is appropriate to share. Please be respectful to uphold authenticity while also remembering not to gossip.

When is a time when you have noticed your hope destroyed by bitterness?

We took a deeper look into the life of Joseph and his struggles towards bitterness, revenge, and not being treated fairly. He wrestled with forgiving his brothers and what to do.

(If there are people in your group who didn't hear the message or forgot some of the key points, consider going back and reading some of the highlights from Genesis 42-45. The Message Outline has some great notes on the main points. It is in the Coastal App if you need it!)

As you listened to this story in the message what is one thing that jumped out to you? Why?

When we talk about hope, it isn't surprising to see opposition and obstacles form around us like Joseph encountered. When we are focusing on hope and trying to trust God with who we are and where He is taking us the enemy seems to step his game up. Maybe you have even noticed recently your temper flare a bit more, or your tone not being as gentle as you had liked it to be when talking to someone. As we become more aware of this we should talk about it and see what we can do to take back the ground we have fought hard to take the past few weeks.

How are you feeling right now personally? More towards hopeful and optimistic or pessimistic and bitter? Why?

It is vital to our spiritual family and community that we have others who can ask us about how we are doing. This is why we have incorporated accountability in almost every week of the All Church Study. Unfortunately this kind of attitude and heart can cause us to not only poison ourselves, but can become a cancer to many others.

(Ask someone to read this passage from Hebrews)

Hebrews 12:15 (NLT)

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.

This cancer metaphor applies well to Paul's writings in the New Testament as he uses the analogy of a body when talking about the Church (both a local church and the global church). When we have cancer in our lives it can affect the entire body and cause massive damage. We become jaded, bitter, and cynical. These are counter productive to the virtues God desires we show others such as love, forgiveness, patience, and kindness.

Ephesians 4:29-32 (NLT)

Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them. And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

(If you have a coed group or a larger group please consider breaking up in to smaller groups for the remaining discussion time. Try and keep these groups to 4-6 if possible so that people can share openly and authentically.)

What is one area that you struggle to show godly virtues like the ones mentioned in Ephesians 4? How can this passage be applied in your life?

The truth is, most of us struggle with these on a regular basis. Each person may struggle with a different aspect, but if we aren't proactive against this way of living and thinking it will take root in our hearts. The flesh (our sinful nature) is a strong foe for everyone to fight against each and everyday. We nod our heads when we read passages from the Bible like this one, but the application component is hard for everyone. Knowing the right thing to do and doing it is a constant struggle for us as believers.

(Final Question for your smaller groups, if applicable)

What can we do to hold you accountable to letting it go and living more like Jesus?

(For the entire group if you group decided to break up in to smaller groups)

ACTION STEPS:

- 1) List prayer requests and share with members over email or another private way of communication.**
- 2) Text, email, or call someone from your smaller group during the week for accountability.**
- 3) Pray for each other and encourage each other throughout the week.**

FINAL THOUGHTS:

If we are truly going to let our bitterness and anger go, it is going to take the Holy Spirit helping us every step of the way. Practically speaking, it means learning how to forgive each other, communicate better when we have a problem with someone, and do everything in our power to live at peace with everyone. This seems like a tall order, but it is a challenge that the Apostle Paul gives us,

Romans 12:17-19 (NLT)

Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone. Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God.

This is hard for anyone to live out on a regular basis. The false ideas of fairness creep in and cause us to not treat people the way that God commands us to treat them. The important piece to remember is that we have to do all that we can to live in peace with everyone and this includes ourselves. God wants us to be filled with hope and it starts with being at peace.

FAMILY FOCUS:

Lesson on anger:

Say: Men and women have trained wild animals like elephants, tigers and even lions but it is much more difficult to tame a part of your body—the tongue! Everyone gets angry but some of don't have much self-control when we have these strong feelings. It's easy to allow anger to grow and then you blurt out something you regret later. According to James 3:2-8, we must not sin when we feel angry. Let me show you what I mean.

Demonstrate:

A clear drinking glass
Liquid dishwashing detergent
2 tbsp of baking soda
Vinegar
Food coloring
Baking pan

Place the baking pan on the table to catch the overflowing experiment. Place the glass in the center of the pan and fill it nearly full with warm/hot water. If you like, drip two drops of food coloring in the water. Now add three to four drops of liquid detergent. Sprinkle in 2 tablespoons of baking soda. Here comes the fun part—pour in the vinegar! You'll see it bubble up!

Say: We are like the water. The baking soda is like our anger. The vinegar is our self control. If we don't get self-control working properly, it will cause us to do the wrong thing. God's plan is better; stop, pray and walk away!

Lesson on Self Control:

Laugh out loud! Also known as the "giggle game," the laugh out loud game is a hilarious way to show self control. One child sits in a chair while children take turns trying to make the seated child laugh. The only rule—you can't touch the child! Each child has 30 seconds to make the child laugh. If she laughs, the one who induced the laughter gets to take the seat. It's that easy! Before the game begins or after, talk to the children about self control. Share a verse like, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law." (Galatians 5:22-23)

Self-control is crucial for growth. Introducing the subject regularly will keep kids thinking about getting stronger in the Lord.