

Recovering From Resentment

It is a fact of life that people hurt one another intentionally or unintentionally.

How we deal with these hurts will to some degree determine our happiness and fulfilment in life.

If we don't respond correctly to hurt it turns into resentment and resentment to bitterness and bitterness leaves in its wake pain, frustration, hate, violence and many other evils.

If we hold onto a hurt it becomes hate, and such resentment is a powerful destroyer of relationships.

Resentment eats up our energy in such large quantities that we are soon left emotionally empty inside, nothing to give.

We hear such remarks as *"I don't love my husband anymore"* or *"I don't have any feeling for my wife anymore, I'm just dead inside, no feelings for her in me."*

The good news is that we can recover from resentment, there are certain principles we can understand and apply which will reverse the downward slope from hurt to hate.

1 Corinthians 13:5 [NIV] *"... love keeps no record of wrongs."*

1 Corinthians 13:5 [Living Bible] *"Love does not hold grudges."*

God has given us an excellent example in His Word of a person who had every reason for being filled with resentment.

The person's name was Job.

Job was most likely the wealthiest man who lived in his generation yet in one period of 24 hours Job lost everything he possessed. He became bankrupt, all his children were murdered, his wife turned against him, he was given an incurable, humiliating disease that was extremely painful. Finally all of his *"friends"* told him it was all his fault.

Job had every reason in the world to become resentful, but Job recovered from being resentful and left us an example to follow.

As a result of Job's response to hurt we are told that God blessed Job abundantly in the latter part of his life.

Regardless of whatever painful hurts we have had or are experiencing now God can make the rest of your life the best of our life.

Causes of resentment

a) What people say about us can cause resentment

Job 12:5 [Good News Bible] *"You have no troubles, yet you make fun of me, you hit a man who is about to fall."*

Can words hurt us? Yes they can, very deeply, and remain with us for years.

We can recall unkind words that were said to or about us when we were at school, no matter how long ago that was.

b) What people think about us can cause resentment

Job 19:5 [Good News Bible] *“You think you are better than I am, and regard my troubles as proof of my guilt.”*

We can be hurt without people speaking to us. **We have all experienced rejection just by the way people look at us or avoid talking to us.**

We can be hurt by people who treat us as if we don't exist or that what we think or believe is of no real value.

Some of us had *“unpleaseable”* parents, no matter how hard we tried we could never fulfil their expectations, that hurts.

c) What people do to us can cause resentment

Job 19:19 [Good News Bible] *“... those I love most have turned against me.”*

The tragedy is that physical, emotional and spiritual abuse is increasing in society today.

The place where resentment can rear its ugly head the most is in the family, among those who should love each other the most.

The closer people are to us the greater they have a chance to hurt us and cause resentment.

Members of a family can be disloyal and with intimate knowledge of us can say things or do things to us that hurt deeply.

When people hurt us the normal reaction is to become resentful. There is no doubt about such a fact.

But becoming resentful is not the right reaction to a hurt when we desire to build good relationships or live peacefully with other people.

The problems of reacting to a hurt with resentment

a) Resentment is unreasonable

Job 5:2 [Good News Bible] *“To worry yourself to death with resentment would be a foolish, senseless thing to do.”*

Resentment is illogical, there is no value to such a reaction, it is non-productive.

Ecclesiastes 7:9 [Good News Bible] *“... it is foolish to harbour a grudge.”*

Why is resentment foolish and non-productive?

Resentment cannot change the past no matter how much we resent what happened.

Resentment will not correct the problems in the present.

Resentment will not make us feel any better in the future.

So why get resentful?

It doesn't work for good, it is foolish and senseless.

Psalm 106:33 [Good News Bible] *“They made him so bitter that he spoke without stopping to think.”*

Haven't we all because of resentment said or done things we afterwards wish we hadn't? Resentment can lead to foolish actions.

b) Resentment is unhelpful

Job 18:4 [Good News Bible] *“You are only hurting yourself with your anger.”*

Resentment is self-inflicting.

When we get resentful it always hurts us far more than the person who has hurt us and caused us to be resentful.

Resentment just adds to the hurt that caused us to be resentful.

Some of us are allowing people who hurt us in the past to continue to hurt us now by becoming resentful.

While they are living their lives free from any memory of what they did to hurt us.

Such a reaction is foolish; don't let them continue to hurt us.

Resentment is a choice that never brings anything that is of value to our lives, only further hurt and more intense resentment.

Resentment keeps us on a downward spiral of hurt and yet more hurt and unhappiness.

c) Resentment is unhealthy

Job 21:23-25 [Good News Bible] *“Some men stay healthy till the day they die ... others have no happiness at all, they live and **die with bitter hearts.**”*

Resentment is emotional suicide, it is like a hole in the heart that drains away our life.

Holding on to a grudge is holding on to hurt which only makes us feel ill.

It is not always what we eat that makes us unhealthy but what we allow to *“eat at us”* that can make us ill.

There is a very strong relationship between our thoughts and our physical body.

There is a link between our emotional outlook and our body's wellbeing.

There is a link between our spiritual approach to life and our emotional and physical health.

There is a relationship between sin and sickness. Not all sickness is caused by sin but unconfessed sins can cause us to be under emotional stress that will cause the body to be unhealthy, by repressing the immune system of the body that resists disease.

Proverbs 17:22 [Good News Bible] *“Being cheerful keeps you healthy. It is a slow death to be gloomy all the time.”*

For our own physical health let go of resentment and forgive those who have hurt us.

The cure for resentment

a) Reveal our hurt – admit we are hurt

Job 7:11 [Good News Bible] *“I cannot be quiet, I am angry and bitter. I have to speak.”*

Job 10:1 [Good News Bible] *“Listen to my bitter complaint. Don’t condemn me God! Tell me! What is the charge against me?”*

Job did not hide or “bottle up” his feelings. He let those who had hurt him know that he had been hurt by their words or actions.

Job revealed his resentment to God in prayer, asked God to tell him why He was allowing others to cause him so much hurt.

Job told God how angry he was and how unfair it was for him to suffer in this way.

Job 10:3 [Good News Bible] *“Is it right for you [God] to be so cruel? To despise what You Yourself have made? And then to smile on the schemes of wicked men?”*

Job did not hide his feelings from God, the relationship he had with his Creator was such that nothing was hidden between them. This was the relationship of close trusting friends who loved and respected each other.

What was God’s reaction to this outburst from Job?

Was God surprised? No. God already knew of the bitterness Job was feeling. God just wanted Job to reveal and express that feeling.

Revealing our feeling is the beginning of healing.

We need to share with someone we can trust how we have been hurt, to start the healing process.

Some of us are angry with God over things that have happened in the past that have caused us great pain and distress.

God knows this pain, we know the pain, but we don’t admit it to Him.

The starting point to healing this resentment that is causing a rift in our relationship with God is to admit the hurt to God.

God will not incinerate us for expressing our hurt and anger to Him.

God knows that expressing our hurt will be for our benefit and His great love for us wants what is best for our welfare.

What is there in our lives that we pretend is not there when it is hurting us emotionally?

A resentment we have against God or some other person whom we feel has caused us hurt.

That feeling of resentment will continue to be detrimental to our welfare until we confess it, reveal it to those involved.

We cannot close the door to past events that hurt without facing up to them.

There is no closure without disclosure.

One way to bury past hurts is to sit down and write a letter to God disclosing all our past hurts and say to God *“where were you when this happened?”*

“Why did you allow me to go through this painful experience.”

God knows just how we feel. Remember He made us, and He experienced personally what it is like to exist as a human being.

Hebrews 4:14-16 [NIV] *“Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. **For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are-- yet was without sin.** Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”*

God understands all hurt, He has experienced all kinds of hurt.

b) Release the person who caused the hurt

Job 42:10 [Good News Bible] *“After Job prayed for his three friends, the Lord made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before.”*

We forgive and pray for the person who has caused us the hurt, because we will never cure our resentment until we do forgive them.

Job’s friends hurt him in many ways, they betrayed their friendship by being disloyal. They criticised him. They misunderstood him. They falsely accused him, saying all that had happened to Job was his fault when it was not, God had allowed Satan to bring all these trials on Job.

Job had every right to be resentful.

When did God bring Job out of these trials?

Not after Job being resentful had retaliated or sought revenge, but **after Job had released those who hurt him and prayed for their welfare.**

Matthew 5:10-11 [NIV] *“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.”*

We are blessed in these painful circumstances because we have an opportunity to react in the same way as Jesus Christ did when He was persecuted.

Matthew 23:34 [Good News Bible] *“Jesus said, forgive them Father! They don’t know what they are doing.”*

There is no resentment or bitterness in the Creator God we worship because of the way He releases all who hurt Him by their sin.

Have we heard or made remarks ourselves like *“I’m never going to be like my mum who hurt me so much”* or *“I’m never going to be like my dad whose lifestyle embarrassed me so much”* ?

What are we doing with such thoughts?

We are concentrating on the very thing we want to avoid, and if we don’t release these people who have hurt us we will begin to resemble them.

When we release others who have hurt us then we release ourselves from the bitterness that is damaging our personalities.

How often do we have to release others by forgiving them?

Matthew 18:21-22 [NIV] *“Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, ‘Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?’ Jesus answered, ‘I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.’”*

If we are counting it is not forgiving that person.

Forgiveness must be continual and complete.

Do we store up ammunition in our relationship to fire back at the other person when we find ourselves in disagreement with them?

If we do this we are not loving for love keeps no record of wrong, [1 Corinthians 13:5 – NIV translation].

Forgiveness is a continual process. We keep on forgiving the person who hurt us every time the memory of that event returns to our mind.

How do we know when forgiveness is complete?

Forgiveness is only complete when the memory of the event comes to mind and we do not experience any hurt only love for that person.

We have then released that person.

We will know of this release when we understand the other person’s hurt, we can pray for their success and we feel comfortable in their presence.

Matthew 5:43-48 [NIV] *“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: **Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.** He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? **Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.**”*

Forgiving and releasing those who hurt us is part of the road towards becoming perfect and mature even as God is perfect and totally mature.

Isaiah 43:25-26 [Living Bible] *“I, yes. I alone am He who blots away your sins for My own sake and will never think of them again. Oh remind Me of your sins, plead your case for my forgiving you.”*

Here we have the perfect programme for releasing any resentment. God wants to blot out our sins from His mind because His great love for us causes Him to suffer hurt when He sees our sins bringing us pain and suffering.

This restoring of our relationship with God will only happen when we reveal our feelings of hurt to God by talking with Him about them.

To restore the relationship between God and ourselves both of us have to release the hurt, forgive and then forget.

When we know and experience the love of God in our lives we realise that all He does and allows is for our good in the end.

Why?

Because God is love and He cannot react out of character. All God does is governed by love.

James 1:2-4 [NIV] *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”*

When we consider the character God is developing in us through the vehicle of trials, we will not only forgive God for these trials but we will thank Him for them.

c) Refocus our lives

As long as we focus on the person who has hurt us they control our lives.

Job 11:13-18 [Good News Bible] *“Put your heart right, reach out to God ... face the world again, firm and courageous. Then all your troubles will fade from your memory like floods that are past and remembered no more.”*

Three steps for inner healing from hurt and resentment.

a) We put our heart right

What does this mean?

Do the right thing as God has shown us.

Release the one who has hurt us.

Matthew 6:14 [Good News Bible] *“If you forgive others the wrongs they have done you, your Father in Heaven will forgive you.”*

As we forgive those who have hurt us, as we release them so God releases our sins that have cut us off from Him. Our relationship with our Creator is restored and His peace floods into our mind.

Even if we do not feel like forgiving those who hurt us.

Even if we do not feel that they deserve our forgiveness.

Even if they do not have forgiving nature themselves.

We do what is right in God's Eyes, we release them.

b) We reach out to God

1 Peter 5:5-7 [New King James] *“Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’ Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.”*

We reach out to God by developing the mind of a servant, following the example of Jesus Christ.

Matthew 20:25-28 [Living Bible] *“Jesus called them [His disciples] together and said ‘Among the heathen, kings are tyrants and each minor official lords it over those beneath him. But among you it is quite different. Anyone wanting to be a leader among you must be your servant, you must serve like a slave. Your attitude must be like my own for I, the Messiah, did not come to be served, but to serve, and give my life as a ransom for many.’”*

Christ as always is the perfect example of our attitude of mind if we are to be at one with God, our Creator.

Christ through His Atoning Blood sacrifice opened the door to the Father's throne room so we could reach out to our Creator.

We reach out to God by inviting Jesus Christ into our lives, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as the Director of our lives, so that His forgiving nature may become ours.

We have to reach out to God because we on our own will not be able to manufacture enough human forgiveness to deal with all the hurts we will experience in our lives.

We need God's forgiving nature in our lives.

c) We then face the world again

When we are hurt we are tempted to withdraw from society.

We surround ourselves with a protective wall so that we will not be hurt by others again.

We draw back from close relationships for fear that we will be hurt once more.

But this withdrawal from others will only prolong the hurt we have received.

We have to look to the future. If we only dwell on the past we are allowing the hurts of the past to define our identity, saying to ourselves "I'm a victim".

This is like driving a car looking only in the rear mirror, we are just heading for a crash.

In God's Eyes the past is not what is important, this can be covered by the atoning blood of Christ.

What is important to God and ourselves is the direction of the path we are treading in life today, the goal we have before us.

If we do apply these three principles the past hurts will fade in our memory and the pain will be released.

Proverbs 14:12 [Amplified Bible] *"There is a way which seems right to a man and appears straight before him, but at the end of it are the ways of death."*

We may feel that we need to heal our hurt memories before we can face the future, but this does not happen, for we now know it is the wrong way to proceed

God's way so often is the very opposite to how we feel we should proceed.

God tells us through Job to:-

- a) **Accept Jesus Christ** as Director of our lives
- b) **Humble ourselves** and reach out to God
- c) **Look to the future** allowing God to direct our path

Then the memories of past resentful hurts will fade. We cannot resist a feeling we can only replace it. Whatever we resist persists.

We can recover from resentment.

Resentment towards God and towards human beings who have brought pain and hurt to our lives.

Job 42:12 [Good News Bible] *“For blessed the last part of Job’s life even more than he blessed the first part.”*

We can be emotionally healed of hurt, the rest of our life can then be the best of our life.