

Letting Go of Joy-Stealers

May 21, 2024

Song of Songs 2:15:

Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards, our vineyards that are in bloom.

We need to “catch those little foxes” that keep messing up our lives and let go of them.

John 15:11: I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

John 16:24: Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.

These “little foxes” contaminate our joy; we have incomplete joy. If we can let go of these joy-stealers, then we’ll discover what we’ve been missing: the *complete joy* that comes when we let go.

Isaiah 43:18-19: Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.

How often we miss the new thing that springs up because we hang on to something harmful. There are many daily issues all of us face which we simply need to recognize as joy-stealers and let go of them by God’s grace.

Letting Go of Hurt Feelings

Why do we hang on to hurt feelings so long, thereby heaping unhappiness on our own heads?

Pity parties are pitiful! God sees self-pity as a sin.

Think about the little things that can hurt your feelings in a normal day:

- A person ignored me—didn’t acknowledge he/she even saw me.
- A friend spoke to me in a very unfriendly tone of voice.
- My sister didn’t call me for five days—and she knew I was sick.
- My boss didn’t give me credit for an important project I completed.
- My husband didn’t even notice my new hairdo.
- My close friend had a dinner party and didn’t invite me.

Name some other small things that can happen to hurt your feelings.

Perceived Offenses

Our hurt feelings are often based on inaccurate information and wrong perceptions. These perceived offenses happen regularly, and the person who takes them personally and reads into them some intended offense is bound to allow their feelings to be hurt quite often.

- When you feel offended, stop and ask yourself, “Did she/he truly intend to offend me?”
- Put yourself in the other person’s shoes and think, “I wonder if something is wrong?”
- Remind yourself that you do the same thing to others at times.
- Send up a quick prayer for her/him and ask God to meet their need whatever it may be.

Exaggerated Offenses

Any time we dwell on negatives, we exaggerate them and they take on far greater importance than they merit.

Hurt feelings grow and take on a life of their own!

Hebrews 12:15: See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

Hurt feelings turn into bitter roots, and those bitter roots grow up to cause trouble.

What Does Jesus Think?

Can you even imagine Jesus throwing a pity party? What if this very day you had to stand before Jesus and explain the hurt feelings you are harboring right now? What would you say to him?

When we are weighed down with unnecessary hurt feelings, when we’re stuck in our pity parties instead of moving into the new things he has for us, surely Jesus must shake his head in regret that we can’t let go of these hurts. He knows better than anyone how they are robbing us of joy and peace and the abundant life he came to give us.

How to Let Go of Hurt Feelings

Here are six general principles to help you stop harboring hurt feelings:

1. Change your attitude about pity parties.

Ask God to give you holy distaste for pity parties, to see them as he sees them, and to get sick and tired of feeling sorry for yourself.

2. Refuse to think about the bad reports; think only about the good reports!

Philippians 4:8: Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. (KJV)

When you start to dwell on an offense, make yourself think of something positive about the person who offended you.

As soon as you become aware that you’re dwelling on some perceived or real offense, replace that wrong thinking with thankful thoughts.

2 Corinthians 10:5: We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

3. *Resist the enemy who is trying to entangle you and hinder you by making you feel sorry for yourself.*

James 4:7: Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

4. *Think about Jesus and all that he endured.*

Hebrews 12:2: ...fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

By a set of your will, stop thinking about “poor me” and think about Jesus; fix your eyes on him. We can learn to *scorn* the self-pity attitudes that keep us from doing what God has for us to do.

5. *Get busy doing something constructive.*

“If you have time to feel sorry for yourself, then you don’t have enough chores to do.”

6. *If you have something against someone else, either go to them and get it out in the open, or let it go.*

There are times when we need to go to the person who has hurt our feelings and get some issues out in the open. The worst thing you can do is to keep brooding about it. Either do something or let it go.

Scriptural Principles

These passages give us guidance on what we should do when we are hurt.

Isaiah 58:6 – 9

“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? ⁷Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? ⁸Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.⁹ Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.

Romans 8:28

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.

Romans 12:19

Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord.