

# “RECOVERING FROM RESENTMENT”

Building Great Relationships - Part 7 of 9

1 Corinthians 13:5

September 7, 2008

News Flash: People Hurt Other People and People Are Hurt by Other People. Intentionally, unintentionally, we hurt each other. Know that you have and will hurt some people, and some people have and will hurt you. How we handle those hurts determines how happy we will be in life. If we hold on to our hurts, they can turn into hate or resentment. And resentment destroys relationships. People tell me, “I don’t love my husband any more.” “I don’t have any feelings for my wife.” “I’m dead inside. What’s wrong with me?” Resentment. Resentment zaps our energy to such an extent that soon we become emotionally empty. We have nothing more to give. But the good news is that we can recover from resentment. 1 Corinthians 13:5 *“Love keeps no record of wrongs.”* It’s an accounting term. It doesn’t keep a ledger of wrongs. Love does not hold a grudge.

Job had every reason in the world to be filled with resentment. He had been the wealthiest man on earth, maybe the richest of all time, and all of a sudden he lost it all. He went bankrupt. He lost his entire estate. All of his children were murdered. His wife turned against him. He got an incurable disease that was extremely painful. All his friends came to him but instead of comforting him, they blamed him. No sympathy at all. He had every reason to be resentful. But instead, he found a way to recover from the resentment. And we are told that God made the last part of Job’s life greater than the first. Regardless of the pain we’ve had in the past, God can make the rest of our life the best of our life if we will only do what Job did.

We’re going to look at the cures for resentment but first we look at the causes:

**1. What people say about us.** *“You have no troubles, yet you make fun of me; you hit a man who is about to fall.”* (Job 12:5) Can words hurt us? Certainly. And those hurts stay with us. In a moment we can remember things that kids said to us on the playground, words that still hurt us today. That pain can cause resentment.

**2. What people think about us.** *“You think you are better than I am and regard my troubles as proof of my guilt.”* (Job 19:5) Can we be hurt without having anybody saying anything to us? Sure. Have you ever felt rejected when nothing was said? Just by the way people look at us, by their body language, have you felt rejected. We can be hurt by people ignoring us, when they don’t even acknowledge our existence. And there are others who we just can’t please no matter how hard we try. And that, too, hurts.

**3. What people do to us.** *“Those I love most have turned against me.”* (Job 19:19) Job says, *“Those I love most”*. The number one place resentment shows up is not at work, but in the home, in marriages and families. The closer people are to us the greater the chance they

have to hurt us. They can betray us, be disloyal, say and do hurtful things. It is in our homes that we have to deal with resentment the most. It is what people say, think, and do to us.

When people hurt us, we can become resentful. That's a natural, normal reaction. But it's not the right reaction. It does more harm than good. This is what Job tells us about resentment.

**1. Resentment is unreasonable.** It doesn't make sense. It's illogical, irrational, not worth the effort. *"To worry yourself to death with resentment would be a foolish, senseless thing to do."* (Job 5:2) Why? Because we can't change the past. No matter how much we resent what happened, it's not going to change the past. And it won't correct the problem in the present. Resentment doesn't make us feel any better. So why get resentful. It doesn't work. It's foolish and senseless. Have you ever done something dumb or silly because you were resentful. "I'll show him!" and you go out and do something stupid and make a fool of yourself. Psalm 109:33 *"He was so bitter he spoke without stopping to think."* Often we do that. We get so bitter and resentful. We say stuff without thinking, and that's not good.

**2. Resentment is unhelpful.** *"You are only hurting yourself with your anger!"* (Job 18:4) When we get resentful it always hurts us more than the person we're resentful about. They might be totally oblivious to our thoughts and feelings. I remember watching the great theologians Larry, Moe, and Curly. Curly was all upset because a guy kept slapping him on the chest. So he tells Moe "I'm going to get some dynamite and strap it to my chest. The next time he slaps me it'll blow his hand off!" Good idea. Resentment, trying to hurt the other person, is like that. We fire the weapon at them, usually missing, but the recoil knocks us on our butt. It always hurts us more than anybody else. While we're stewing and spewing, they're moving on. Don't let the people from your past continue to make you miserable now. They can't hurt you any more unless you choose to let them. Resentment is unreasonable, unhelpful, and it's not worth the price. I've heard it said that "Resentment is hell in the heart." The most miserable people are those filled with resentment. Resentment just prolongs the hurt. It's foolish, unhelpful, and it costs too much.

**3. Resentment is unhealthy.** Job 21:23-25 *"Some men stay healthy till the day they die ... others have no happiness at all; they live and die with bitter hearts."* We can't be resentful and happy at the same time. If we're holding a grudge, we're holding on to a hurt. And it's unhealthy. People say, "Watch what you eat." But it's not what you eat as much as what's eating you. There is a strong relationship between our physical health and our spiritual health, between our emotional makeup and our physical makeup. There is a relationship between sin and sickness. I'm not saying that all sickness is caused by sin. It's not. But a lot of problems we carry around, we have brought on ourselves by holding grudges. And it always hurts us more than anybody else. It ruins relationships. Proverbs 17:22 *"A cheerful heart is good medicine but a crushed spirit dries up your life."* Resentment will remove our joy and leave us all dried up, just a shell of ourselves. For our mental, emotional, spiritual, physical health, we have to let it go. We have to forgive. But how? Job shows us the way.

## **1. Reveal your hurt.**

Admit that you are hurt. Job 7:1 *“I can’t be quiet. I’m angry and I’m bitter. I have to speak.”* And again in Job 10:1 *“Listen to my bitter complaint. Don’t condemn me God.”* In his pain Job cries out. “God, I don’t like this! It’s not fair! This stinks, and I’m angry about it!” He tells God how angry he is. Was God surprised by that? No. God knew Job was angry from the moment he got upset. But Job had to admit it, to get it out in the open so he could deal with it. We move toward healing by first revealing our hurt. That’s how it starts.

Some of you might be angry with God for things that happened in your past, or maybe they’re happening right now. God knows it. We know it. But we won’t admit it. “I can’t yell at God.” But to heal we must reveal what we feel. God’s not going to be surprised. He won’t start throwing thunderbolts at us. God knows us and still loves us. God wants us healed, but we have to start the healing process by admitting it. And it’s not a new thought. Two weeks ago we talked about four things we can do with our negative emotions. We can repress them, suppress them, express them, none of which work, or we can confess them to God. It is the start of the healing process.

I often think about the teaching of Dr. Len Sweet, who argues that there is no present. We live on the overlap of where we have been and where we are going. We need to know where we have come from and where we are headed. But if we keep holding on to what was, if our focus is in the past, it will prevent us from moving to the future. Remember that the windshield is always bigger than the rearview mirror. We need that mirror to see what is behind us, but we need to focus on what is before us. To move forward, we need to admit our pain from the past.

Some people try to bury the pains of their past, but those hurts keep resurrecting. Why? Because they’re still alive. We never dealt with them, and so they remain active and alive. We’ve got to deal with them. We start by admitting that we hurt. If you go to a doctor because you’re in pain, but don’t tell the doctor how and where you hurt, it won’t do you much good. We need to admit it. First to God, and then to a caring friend. Tell those who care about us so they can support and strengthen us, and enable us to stop looking backwards, and begin to look to a better future.

## **2. Release your offender.**

Forgive them. Because we’re not going to get any relief until we release them. Job’s friends hurt him tremendously. They betrayed him. They were disloyal, criticized him, misunderstood him. Nothing hurts more than being misunderstood or falsely accused. It wasn’t Job’s fault. He was innocent. He had every right to be resentful. But God turned around Job’s life not after he retaliated or got revenge, but when he forgave those who had hurt him. And Job not only released his offenders, he also prayed for their success. Job 42:10 *“After Job prayed for his three friends, God made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before.”* God restored Job, but only after he had released his offenders.

We forgive our offenders. And we need to remember that forgiveness is not a one time event. It is a process. Matthew 18:21-22 *“Peter asked Jesus, ‘Lord, how many times should I*

*forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?’*” If we count, it’s not forgiveness because love keeps no record of wrongs. Sometimes we hold on to the hurts so we can use them against the offender down the road. That is not acting in a loving, forgiving way. Jesus said that we are to keep forgiving until we lose count. Forgiveness must be continual, until the offender is fully released.

How do I know when I’ve fully released them? It doesn’t hurt anymore. When we can understand their hurts. When we pray for their success. When we can feel comfortable in their presence. But that’s tough because often we don’t feel like forgiving them. But we don’t forgive them because we want to. We forgive because it is the right thing to do. And we do it to free ourselves from the pain. Forgiveness is often for our benefit more than theirs. Still sometimes we resist because it just doesn’t seem right that they would get away with causing pain in my life. Well here’s a little insight for you - life is not fair. So we trust God to care for it in God’s time. One day God is going to even it all out. In the end it will be fair and just. So in the meantime we do what God says and release the offender so we can be set free.

So reveal your hurt. Release your offender, and then **3. Refocus your life.**

That’s how we heal that hidden memory. As long as we focus on somebody we resent, they control us. We’re worrying about something they’ve already forgotten. Job did three things in refocusing his life. They’re found in Job 11:13-16 *“Put your heart right, reach out to God, then face the world again firm and courageous. Then all your troubles will fade from your memory like floods from your past and remembered no more.”* These are the three steps for inner healing.

**1. Put your heart right.** To be healed emotionally, we need to do the right thing, the righteous thing and release the offender. Don’t try to get even. Let it go and forgive them.

**2. Reach out to God.** Invite Christ to come into your life and fill you with His forgiveness. Why? Because on our own we don’t have enough forgiveness to handle all the hurts we have to face. We need God’s forgiveness in our life. In World War II, Corrie Ten Boom hid Jews in her apartment to protect them from the Nazis. When that was discovered, Corrie and her whole family were sent to concentration camps. Everybody in her family was killed, but not Corrie. Her they tortured and abused. She later went back and met the guards who had abused her. And forgave them. In and of ourselves, that’s not possible, but with God in our life, it is. It is holding on and acting on the belief that God’s love can even bring good things out of the bad things that happen to us. And so we reach out to God, that we might be filled with His forgiveness.

**3. Face the world again.** When we’re hurt, we’re tempted to withdraw into a shell. We vow to never let anyone get close to us again so we can’t be hurt again. But that response only does greater damage. It doesn’t help us or heal us. We’ve got to *“face the world again.”* Because that allows us to let go of the past and turn to look toward the future. We refocus our life and start living again. It is the proclamation that we are not a victim any more. We

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face the world again. Then the memory is going to fade and the pain is going to be released. Sometimes we think that our memories need to be healed before we can face the future, but like so much else, it is the other way around. That's because we cannot resist a feeling, we can only replace it. It's a law in our life. Whatever we resist, persists. If I push against your hand you're going to push back. The key is to focus on something new so we can stop focusing on the hurt. We go a new direction.

Job did have a happy ending. Job 42:12. "*God blessed the last part of Job's life even more than He blessed the first.*" The rest of Job's life became the best of his life. We want that for our life as well. And since it is the same God, we can have the same result. But to get there, we have to let go of our past hurts. So what hurts are you holding on to? And who do you need to forgive? Some need to forgive a former spouse. Or a former friend. A co-worker or boss. They made your life miserable in the past. Don't let them make your life miserable now. And they can't hurt you any more unless you hold on to a grudge. Resentment is not worth it. It's unreasonable, unhelpful, unhealthy. We need to forgive not because we want to, but because it is the right thing, the righteous thing to do. We need to do it so we can be healed. And in your life, may it be so. Amen.