

## Love Beyond: Love Beyond Resentment

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Jesus set the standard for “Loving Beyond”

He called us

And demonstrated for us

The way to love God with all you have

And He called us

And demonstrated for us

The way to love people

With all we have

I found it interesting

I was looking at the passage in Matthew

**Where Jesus gives us the greatest commandments {Show Matthew 22:37-39}**

Love God

And Love people

And He’s quoting a passage in Deuteronomy 6

That the Jews call the Shema

Where it calls them to love God

And a passage in Leviticus 19

Where God calls them to love their neighbor

As they love themselves

Ancient Scriptures

That were still relevant in His modern times

That are still relevant in ours

The Deuteronomy passage

Is kind of famous for Jews even to this day

But the Leviticus passage is a little more obscure for us

Let me show it to you:

**Leviticus 19:17-18 - Do not hate a fellow Israelite in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in their guilt. Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.**

Jesus quotes the end of the passage

Love your neighbor as yourself

But the context is so powerful

**In verse 17, God says rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in their guilt**

What's that mean?

Some suggest it means hold them accountable

Some say it means be honest with your concerns

We don't know for sure

But I think it's the second

Because the next statement gives specifics

Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in their guilt

How could you share in their guilt?

### By seeking revenge

They frustrated you

You didn't say anything

It built up in you

So that now you can't love them like you love yourself

And you're taking action against them in revenge

-OR-

You share their guilt

### By bearing a grudge against them

So, you're not seeking revenge

But your heart's still affected

Either way

They were guilty for doing whatever it was

But now you're *both* guilty

Because you didn't say anything

And now it's affecting your relationship

You're bearing a grudge

You're seeking revenge

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This passage is so great

Because it hits all of us

Regardless of our personality

A group of us – maybe about half - would never retaliate

We wouldn't physically strike out

Or say a harsh word

Or purposely hurt someone or their feelings

And we kind of look down our noses (spiritually)

At those of you who want revenge

But then when God says,

Oh yeah, but don't hold a grudge either

And we get a little squeamish

Now the rest of you

You don't struggle holding grudges

Because you let out all your emotion when it happened

So, there's nothing to hang onto

You let it all out

But you have a hard time not retaliating

Not seeking revenge

And the great thing

The great thing is

You're married to each other

Or you work in the same cubicle

Or your next-door neighbors  
And God says I want you to love the other person  
Just as much as you love your self  
And it's gonna *drive* you crazy  
But if you love them  
You're going to *grow* like crazy  
And that's going to be... beyond  
Loving beyond

Since the text hit two different groups  
Let's talk to each of you for a second

### **For the retaliators**

Look at this description of Jesus  
From the Apostle Peter

**1 Peter 2:20b-23 - But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps.**

Now wait a second  
This is not the part I want you to see  
But this is a little much  
Don't you think?!?  
Our calling  
Is to suffer?!?  
I mean, are you kidding me?

I have never seen a Thomas Kinkade painting

With this verse on it

“If you suffer for doing good... this is commendable before God”

Are you serious?!?

But Peter says

With a straight face

Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example,

That you *should* follow in his steps.

Not that you *might* follow

Or you *could* have to follow

No – He says Christ suffered for us

Leaving us an example

That we *should* follow

In His steps

We *should* suffer

He’s got more:

**“He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth.” When they hurled their insults at Him, He did not retaliate; when He suffered, He made no threats. Instead, He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly.**

Jesus faced unimaginable torture

What we have to deal with at work

Or from our ex

Or from our spouse or kids or finances or health

What we have to deal with

Pales in comparison

And yet, look at how Jesus handled it

When they hurled their insults at Him, He did not retaliate;

When He suffered, He made no threats.

That's not how we do it... today

How was He *able* to do that?

He entrusted Himself... to Him who judges justly

In my head, this is what it looks like

**Suffering**

**Can cause us to retaliate**

**Or not retaliate**

If we don't retaliate

**We're trusting judgment to God**

Do you see that?

But that means...

When we *do* retaliate

With our actions

Or our words

Or our tone

Or our non-verbal communication

When we *do* retaliate

**We're not trusting judgment to God**

**Romans 12:18-19 - If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 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.**

When we step in

In retaliation

Through our words or our actions or our attitudes

We're not leaving room

For God to do what He intends

We're one kid

Playing parent to our brother or sister

Because we don't think Dad's doing it right



*We're not trusting judgment to God*

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So, Leviticus says we have our retaliators

**And we have our grudge-holders**

Peter spoke to the retaliators

Let's look to Paul for the grudgers

**Ephesians 4:31-32 - *Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.***

That whole verse is good

But I want to focus on the first 5 words

"Get rid of all bitterness"

All of it

Get rid of it

What would it look like

In our lives

If we were purged

Of every.bit.of.bitterness

Like you couldn't find

*Any bitterness*

Towards *anyone*

Or *anything*

*Anywhere* in our life?

In the original language

The Greek language

The word for “rid”

Is a passive verb

It’s not a command

The command

Is to be kind and compassionate

Later in the verse

Do you see that?

The getting rid part is passive

God does that if we allow it

God does that if we’re kind

And compassionate

And tenderhearted

And forgiving

God comes along

And rids us of our bitterness

He will soften your heart

He will rid you of all the bitterness and rage and malice

But you've got to work... hard...

At being tender

Right before this verse

He sets it up with *this* command

**Ephesians 4:26-27 - "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.**

Anger's not wrong

Just don't keep it around

Like a family pet

Don't keep it around

For days at a time

Because if you do

Our enemy will use it

As a foothold

To take more control of your heart & life

Anger's a horrible foundation

But a fantastic stepping-stone

A fantastic stepping stone

Paul writes a similar instruction to the Colossian church:

**Colossians 3:8 - But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.**

Same kind of a list

But I want you to notice something

The next verse

Right after the list in verse 8

Are these words:

**Colossians 3:9-10 - Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.**

If you're going to get rid of the anger

Get rid of the rage & malice

You've got to be honest

Open & vulnerable

With what you *really* think

And how you *really* feel

The retaliators have no trouble with this

But the grudgers do

The grudgers think they're keeping peace

By keeping it to themselves

And chewing on it

Again and again

And they often find themselves

Over time

Full of bitterness

Just so you don't think I'm making this up

Paul tells the Ephesian church the same thing

We just read

**Ephesians 4:26-27 - "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.**

And the verse before that

Verse 25, says:

**Ephesians 4:25 - Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body.**

Unity doesn't happen

In a marriage

In a church

In a community

If people are living in falsehood and pretense

Community doesn't happen

If people aren't real with each other

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I think most of you were really surprised by what I said last week

I was mostly surprised, if that helps  
But I think you were surprised  
Not just that you didn't know what I had been dealing with  
But surprised that a pastor would stand up and say it

I didn't want to

But if we're going to live in community  
We've got to get really good at loving each other  
And if we're going to get really good at loving each other  
We've got to get really good at being vulnerable  
And if we're going to get really good at being vulnerable  
I need to lead the way

I've received a lot of support this week  
You're sharing will probably be to a smaller group than mine  
I thought, if you're gonna do it...  
But you'd receive support if you told people  
What you're going through as well

If we're going to live in community  
We've got to get really good at not being really good

Retaliators

You know who you are  
Trust your retaliation to the One  
Who judges rightly  
Grudgers  
You know who you are too  
Do not lie by stashing away  
All of your frustration  
When we do that  
We're not preserving peace  
We're just kicking the can down the road

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In Acts 8

Peter is interacting with a guy named  
Simon the Sorcerer

He was the David Copperfield of his day  
The David Blaine of his time

And he sees Peter and John  
Lay their hands on people  
And them receive the Holy Spirit

And he says  
I gotta learn how to do that

That would be a cool trick

And so, he pulls Peter aside

Offers him a big chunk of money

If he'll teach him the trick

**Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord in the hope that he may forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. {Acts 8:20-22}**

That's about what you'd expect

You can't buy the gift of God with money

But what he says next is stunning to me

**For I see that you are \_\_\_\_\_ and captive to sin." {Acts 8:23}**

What would you expect Peter to say in the blank?

You're trying to buy the gift of God

You're trying to deceive people with spiritual things for money

You are captive to sin... and... what?

Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord in the hope that he may forgive you for having such a thought in your heart.



**For I see that you are *full of bitterness and captive to sin.***

How are those connected?

And how did Peter see that?

I think he had the eyes of God to see

God gave him super-natural ability to see inside Simon's soul

But I think this also tells us that bitterness

Is a root of all kinds of other problems

When we allow bitterness to grow

When we allow bitterness to fester

That cancer spreads and shows itself

In a myriad of unexpected places

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Simon was showing greed and narcissism

But the root was bitterness

Where does it show up for you?

I mean, if we had God's eyes to see

How many of us have symptoms in our emotions or relationships

But the cause

The root

Is bitterness

Paul says, Get rid of all bitterness

Peter says, entrust yourself to the One who judges justly

Hebrews says:

**Hebrews 12:14-15 - Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. 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.**

If we had eyes to see

How much of the trouble in our lives

Comes from a bitter root

That we've allowed to grow up

How many of us are defiled

That word literally means:

**"Tainted at the source so that everything passing through it also becomes stained." – μαιίνω (miainó) – "to defile"**

How many of us are defiled

And we never thought it was bitterness

But guess what?

*Our bitterness has tainted us at the source*

So that everything that passes through us

Also becomes stained

What do we do?

Because if we're going to do this right  
We've got to learn to love.beyond.resentment

### **Step one – acknowledge**

Is there any resentment in me?

Like can I find

Any bitterness

Towards anyone

Or anything

Anywhere in my life?

David's prayer here is helpful:

**Psalms 139:23-24 (NLT) - Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends You, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.**

Invite God to scan you for bitterness

Invite God to search your heart for resentment

And then ask Him to rid you of it

The first step is to acknowledge

### **Step two – Ban**

You won't do this perfectly

And you won't do this 100%  
But set your mind & heart  
To no longer allow bitterness  
To live there

You've banned it

When you catch yourself ruminating on what she said  
Or what he did  
Stop yourself  
And pray that God would rid you of all bitterness

**2 Corinthians 10:5b says, "We take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."**

Do not – anymore  
Allow resentment and bitterness  
To take up residence in your life  
Ban them

I made an alliteration to help you  
Acknowledge resentment  
Ban resentment

**And then Consider**

You know, in this life

We can set goals

And make plans

Turn over new leaves

And chart new courses

But over time

Over time

It's hard to stick with new habits

We can all leave here today

Resolute to get rid of the bitterness in our lives

To love beyond resentment

But then life happens

And people happen

And disappointment happens

And it's tough to stay the course

Can I encourage you with this verse?

**Hebrews 12:3 - Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinners,  
so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.**

When you're tempted to quit trying

When you want to stop... and stew... and grow bitter

Consider Jesus

Who endured such opposition from wicked violent people  
So that you will not grow weary and lose heart.