

# PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS TO COMMON PROBLEMS

## Lesson – 7

### "The Problem of Resentment"

#### INTRODUCTION:

- I. All of us have felt the sting of being wrongly accused or of being unfairly treated.
  - A. And for some of us, those memories were VERY PAINFUL and have left us with the scars of DEEP-SEATED resentment.
    1. Someone once said, "Many of our hearts are swollen with the poison of years-old resentment because we've refused to allow Christ to pull the thorns."
      - a. In other words, we're like children who cry LOUD and LONG about the pain we're feeling, but we won't let ANYONE touch the sore.
  - B. Essentially, it all boils down to an improper way of responding to injury.
    1. Rather than respond VERTICALLY (to God), we've chosen to respond HORIZONTALLY – we've chosen to focus all our attention on OURSELVES and on THE WRONG that was done against us.

2. But we DO have another option – we can deliberately choose to shift our focus VERTICALLY by setting our eyes on GOD, not the wrong.
  3. However, for most of us, our first reaction is that it really can't be done.
    - a. It sounds nice coming from some idealistic, visionary preacher, but we live in the REAL world.
    - b. Out here in the trenches, it's a WHOLE DIFFERENT STORY of hurt feelings and ruptured relationships.
    - c. It just simply CAN'T BE DONE!
- C. Well, let me say – NOT ONLY from my personal experience but also from what I read in the Scriptures – it CAN be done!
1. In fact, a man by the name of Joseph DID IT.
    - a. Although his story is familiar to most of us, let's look at it once again – not from the viewpoint of how we see Joseph in childhood Sunday morning Bible classes, but in the REAL world of MISTREATMENT and TOUGH choices.

**BODY:**

- I. The account of Joseph's life show us that while those around him were focused on their own lives, Joseph was focused on God – he had learned to

be a VERTICAL thinker, even when circumstances fought to force his attention to the horizontal.

- A. In **Genesis 37** Joseph is seen as the favorite son of his father.
  - 1. Out of jealousy, his brothers turn against him and sell him to a caravan on its way to Egypt, and then lie to their father Jacob telling him that his favorite son was killed by some wild beast.
    - a. This is the first injustice that will trigger a whole set of other injustices that will come upon this God-fearing young man.
  
- B. In **Genesis 39**, Joseph becomes the personal servant of an Egyptian official named Potiphar.
  - 1. But Potiphar's wife becomes attracted to Joseph, and when he refused to yield to her advances, she screams "rape," and accuses Joseph of trying to force himself upon her.
  - 2. Unfortunately, Potiphar – whether or not he completely believes his wife – does the only thing he can do to protect his reputation.
    - a. He throws Joseph in jail.
  
- C. In **Genesis chapter 40**, Joseph interprets the dreams of Pharaoh's chief baker and chief cup bearer, who are also in prison at the time.
  - 1. Joseph told Pharaoh's cup bearer that he would soon be serving wine to his master once again.

2. The cup bearer was overwhelmed with joy, knowing that he would be out of prison soon.
  3. So Joseph asks him to put in a good word for him to Pharaoh when he gets out.
  4. But once the cup bearer was released, he quickly forgets about this Hebrew slave.
- D. According to **Genesis chapter 41**, Joseph spends two more years in jail, until a miraculous event takes place – Joseph is called to interpret a dream of Pharaoh.
1. This not only gets him released from prison, but after he predicts the coming of a great famine, Joseph is immediately put in charge of overseeing preparations for the coming famine.
  2. He is propelled from a slave in prison to the Prime Minister of Egypt – second in command to Pharaoh himself.
  3. Then, as prophesied, the famine comes.
    - a. But, fortunately, the Egyptians were prepared – thanks to Joseph.
    - b. However, people in other lands WEREN'T prepared and were feeling the effects of the famine full force – including Joseph's own family back in the land of Canaan.

4. So, Joseph's father sends his sons (Joseph's brothers) to Egypt in search for food. **(Genesis 42)**
  - a. The brothers of Joseph are called to appear before Pharaoh's representative to make their requests for grain. What they didn't realize was this man was their brother Joseph – the very brother they sold into slavery years earlier.
5. **Genesis 45:1-3** – *Then Joseph could not restrain himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, "Make everyone go out from me!" So no one stood with him while Joseph made himself known to his brothers. And he wept aloud, and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard it. Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph; does my father still live?" But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed in his presence.*
  - a. Here was Joseph's GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY!
    - (1). Joseph had these wicked, rebellious, self-centered brothers of his right in the palm of his hands.
    - (2). With ONE SIMPLE COMMAND, he could have had their heads, or at least could have thrown them into the VERY prison where he had spent much of his youth.
  - b. But, he didn't – instead, Joseph shows complete forgiveness.

(1). **Genesis 45:5-8** – *But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. For these two years the famine has been in the land, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.*

- E. Did you hear what Joseph said – THREE TIMES he says that it was really GOD who sent him to Egypt! **(vs. 5, 7, 8)**
1. Instead of coming back at them with resentment and bitterness, Joseph responds with love and compassion.
    - a. That's a VERTICAL kind of response!
    - b. It can ONLY come from someone who has their eyes FIXED on God.
  2. Furthermore, Joseph now begins to weave the threads of a torn family back together again.

- (1). **Genesis 45:9-11** – *"Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph: "God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not tarry. You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near to me, you and your children, your children's children, your flocks and your herds, and all that you have. There I will provide for you, lest you and your household, and all that you have, come to poverty; for there are still five years of famine.""*
- (2). **Genesis 45:14-15** – *Then he fell on his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck. Moreover he kissed all his brothers and wept over them, and after that his brothers talked with him.*
3. Just in case you're thinking that Joseph's head was in the clouds, and that he didn't really see his brothers for what they were -- look further.
  - a. **Genesis 45:22-24** – *Then the sons of Israel did so; and Joseph gave them carts, according to the command of Pharaoh, and he gave them provisions for the journey. He gave to all of them, to each man, changes of garments; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver and five changes of garments. And he sent to his father these things:*

*ten donkeys loaded with the good things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain, bread, and food for his father for the journey. So he sent his brothers away, and they departed; and he said to them, "See that you do not become troubled along the way."*

- b. He knew them better than they realized – he knew they were the quarreling kind.
  - c. He knew they would probably argue over what belonged to who, and end up becoming embroiled in some heated argument. So he made sure each one had the same amount as the other – except for his brother Benjamin, of course.
- F. As the story of Joseph continues, we learn that years later his father Jacob dies.
1. This causes his brothers to become a little apprehensive – they felt as long as Dad was alive, Joseph wouldn't take out his revenge.
    - a. **Genesis 50:15** – *When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "Perhaps Joseph will hate us, and may actually repay us for all the evil which we did to him."*
  2. Worried that they are now about to receive their "just deserts," they began begging for mercy.

- a. **Genesis 50:16-18** – *So they sent messengers to Joseph, saying, "Before your father died he commanded, saying, 'Thus you shall say to Joseph: "I beg you, please forgive the trespass of your brothers and their sin; for they did evil to you."' Now, please, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of your father." And Joseph wept when they spoke to him. Then his brothers also went and fell down before his face, and they said, "Behold, we are your servants."*
3. Here was ANOTHER opportunity for Joseph to allow the seeds of bitterness to spring forth.
  - a. For several years now he's provided them with NOTHING but the BEST.
  - b. And NOW he learns that they doubted his sincerity ALL ALONG.
4. But instead of responding with bitter resentment, he responds with compassion and understanding – he responds VERTICALLY.
  - a. **Genesis 50:19-21** – *Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. Now*

*therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.*

- b. Did you hear that!
- c. *"As for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive."* **Genesis 50:20 – The 50-20 Principle**

- II. Joseph is a SHINING EXAMPLE of how we are to respond to injustice.
  - A. Let's take a moment and look at FIVE WAYS we can ALSO overcome the tendency to respond out of bitter resentment to those who have wronged us unjustly.
    - 1. First, accept your situation as being directly from God.
      - a. This is a CRITICAL step that starts us moving in the direction of responding VERTICALLY rather than horizontally.
      - b. If you can trust God to use those times when you're unjustly treated for your GOOD, then you'll be well on your way to VERTICAL THINKER.
    - 2. Second, think OFFENSIVELY, not defensively.
      - a. You can't help but be JOLTED when a close friend or relative turns against you – that's understandable.
      - b. But you can guard against becoming defensive.

- (1). When all your energy is focused on defending yourself, or in thinking up all the reasons why you don't deserve this kind of treatment, you're acting from a HORIZONTAL point of view.
  - c. However, when you begin thinking offensively, seeking God to strengthen you to forgive and forget, then you're thinking becomes VERTICAL.
3. Third, consider the other person's point of view.
  - a. Do your best to put yourself in the other person's shoes.
  - b. You MAY discover that some of their behavior was well-founded.
  - c. If it is, then go to them and ask for forgiveness.
  - d. But even if you DIDN'T do anything wrong, perhaps you'll gain some insights that will help you have compassion on THEM.
4. Fourth, stay positive and search for God's lessons.
  - a. It's easy to let circumstances cause bitterness in our lives – to give into negative reactions – to become cynical and walk around with a "chip on our shoulder."
  - b. Although we can't ALWAYS BE HAPPY, we CAN have JOY.
    - (1). There is a difference between being happy and having joy.

- (2). Joy is possible because God is involved in our lives – even when things don't go well and bring sorrow into our hearts.
  - (3). We may not be happy, but our hearts can ALWAYS be filled with the joy of knowing we're a child of God – nobody can take that from us.
5. Finally, discover ways to show kindness to the other person.
- a. Like it or not, we're going to spend eternity with some of the same folks that have done us wrong on earth! The Lord is going to give them opportunities to repent too!
  - b. And don't forget, ALL OF US have offended SOMEONE in our life – we've ALL hurt someone's feelings unjustly.
    - (1). So none of us can cast self-righteous stones at someone else.
  - c. The apostle Paul actually said it best.
    - (1). **Romans 12:17-21** – *Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. Therefore, "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in*

*so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

## **CONCLUSION:**

- I. Unfortunately, some Christians seem to carry around a diary to chronicle every hurt they've ever experienced.
  - A. They can give you the date, the time of day, the people involved, and practically every word that was said.
    1. Their whole world has turned BITTER with resentment, and they've become increasingly negative, critical, easily offended and friendless.
    2. That's just the OPPOSITE of what the Christian should be.
  - B. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus makes a VERY challenging statement.
    1. In **Matthew 5:43-48** He said, *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you,*

*what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”*

2. There is simply NO WAY we can remain resentful toward ANYONE when we deliberately LOVE our enemies, BLESS those who curse us, DO GOOD to those who hate us, and PRAY for those who spitefully use us and persecute us.
- C. Alexander Pope was the one who said, "To err is human, to forgive is divine."
1. How true.
  2. If Jesus could look down from the cross into the faces of His murderers and say, "*Father, forgive them for they know not what they do,*" (**Luke 23:34**) who are WE to look into the face of those who have wronged us and NOT say the same thing to them?
- D. Is your life filled with the poison of resentment from thorns of bitterness that are still DEEPLY LODGED in your soul?
1. Isn't it about time to let the Lord gently remove those thorns so you can begin to heal?