

GRUDGES

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Grudges! What an ugly word. Grudges can sap the happiness and unity out of our lives, and relationships. Grudges are like an ever-present dark cloud, holding our emotions and happiness hostage.

It has been said that "When you hold a grudge, you want someone else's sorrow to reflect your level of hurt, but the two rarely meet."

The word "grudge" can be used both as a noun and a verb:

1. Noun: a persistent feeling of ill will or resentment resulting from a past insult or injury.
2. Verb: to be resentfully unwilling to give, grant, or allow something.

"Holding a grudge" should not be part of the Christian experience, and yet it is. It is for one reason. We still struggle from the effects of sin. However, we are offered the opportunity to live beyond the dictates of our sinful nature by the use of a powerful force: a force that should be empowered by the Holy Spirit; a force that is within our reach. That "force" is the "power of choice."

You see, we "choose" to be offended. We choose to allow the effects of offences to grow, shadowing and overpowering all that we do. We can also "choose" to let offences and grudges go!

There is an experiment that you can do in your own home that displays the effects of holding on to grudges, offences, and unforgiveness. Take a cup or glass of water. Now, hold the glass straight out, with your arm fully extended. Hold it for 10 seconds and try and estimate the weight of the glass with water.

Many will estimate the weight to be between 6 to 8 ounces. Now, continue holding in that same position for 5 minutes and estimate the weight. Many will now estimate the weight to be 12 or 16 ounces. Now, don't drop your arm yet; hold it for another 20 minutes! Almost no one can hold it that long! Your muscles begin producing lactic acid and need relief; and the longer you hold out that same glass, the more unbearable the weight becomes.

You see, the longer you held the glass of water, the heavier it became! The longer we hold onto grudges, offences, and unforgiveness, the heavier the load becomes. What started in our demonstration as a few ounces of water, in time became unbearable. The only change was the amount of time it was held.

The longer we hold onto grudges, offences, and unforgiveness, the heavier they become.

There are many, many scriptures on forgiveness and unity, and I will list a few of these at the end of this article; but first, I would like to address some simple steps in eliminating grudges, offences, and unforgiveness.

The Apostle Paul provided a simple message regarding disagreements. He was finishing his fantastic epistle entitled "Philippians." In his wonderful, historical, and glorious closing, Paul throws in a simple statement without explanation of the details. I have never heard a message that used this scripture as its core, and yet here it is. It is pregnant with significance.

"I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord" (Philippians 4:2 ESV).

Euodia and Syntyche were two women in the local church. Paul never identifies what the disagreement was about. The specific disagreement issue was not important to Paul. He did not side with either one. One was not right, while the other was wrong. In essence, the Apostle Paul, a man called and ordained by God, simply commands "GET OVER IT!" Simply "agree" in the Lord.

That's it! The power of choice. Get over it! Forgive and move on. Don't hold a grudge. Agree in the Lord. Don't choose to allow the power of unforgiveness, offences, and grudges to hold your thoughts hostage. Just do it!

To be wronged is nothing, unless you choose to remember it.

I find that of the many scriptures on unity, there is one passage that really helps with my weaknesses. Jesus taught us to respect one another. We are to receive and respect one another, by recognizing the "Christ" and ministry in one another. We should not be so much "respecting" one another as a human being, but we "respect" the presence of Christ in one another.

"Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold

water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward" (Matthew 10:40-41 ESV).

This reminds me of the old humorous poem that goes something like this:

"To dwell above with the saints we love, now that will be Glory!
But to dwell below with the saints we know, now that's another story!"

However, by respecting and loving the presence of Christ in one another, we can truly love and forgive one another.

Someone said that "holding a grudge" is like drinking rat poison, and then waiting for the rat to die! Grudges only hurt one person, our self.

I encourage all of our readers who struggle with these issues of holding grudges, or being offended, or harbouring unforgiveness. Choose to get over it! Now!

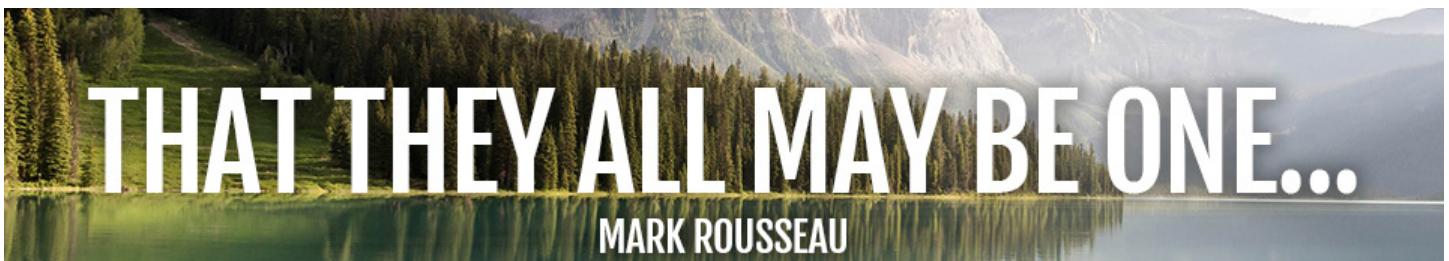
Here are a few scripture references on unity.

"I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" (Ephesians 4: 1-6 ESV).

"Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Philippians 2: 2-4 ESV).

"Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honourable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all" (Romans 12: 16-18).

"Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Colossians 3:13 NIV).✚



There is something I find very challenging and certainly one of my top weaknesses. You may have experienced it, and we certainly see it happening everywhere today. Indeed, it is part of our old nature, the flesh, the carnal man; call it what you will.

It happens when you see someone, or even a group of people, doing something that you know is "just not right." It might be

directed at you or someone else.

It could be as simple as someone cutting us off in traffic. Perhaps it's a politician making what we think to be the "wrong choice." The atrocities of war are considered an even bigger offence and there is no question those things are just not right. No matter, you know the thing is wrong; small offence or large.

Worse yet, you know you are right and pride can start to be a part of the equation. Sadly, that can bring a hardening of our hearts towards others (and sometimes toward the Lord).

That first reaction can be very unloving and unkind to the person or persons committing the offence. It's a natural reaction. "What in the world is wrong with them? What are they thinking?" ... and thoughts start to pile up. The thought can even move us to take matters into our own hands and look for a way to fix the problem in "their" lives.

Consider the Pharisees in John 8:3-5, *"And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?"*

We know how Jesus responded, and we saw the outcome. What gracious mercy He has for us all.

Worse yet, the enemy spots opportunity and feeds us an endless stream of nasty thoughts. Ephesians 6:12 tells us, *"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."*

Being left unattended, a root of bitterness can begin to take hold and the result is found in Hebrews 12:15, *"...lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled."* You see, when we go down that road we play right into the enemy's hand. He wants us to be divided from God and divided from each other as well. His aim is to divide the body of Christ and destroy it. I dare say that this is one of the most dangerous weapons in his arsenal.

Many times what goes along with being offended is that we can push away and isolate ourselves from those who have offended us by conveniently avoiding them. But it says in Proverbs 18:1, ESV, *"Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment."* There are times in the Scripture we are instructed to avoid people engaged in evil activities; but when it comes to offences in the body of Christ, that is another thing.

God, in His wisdom and mercy, has a better way for us. Matthew 7:3 says, *"And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?"* Through the offence, there is a good chance that the Lord is just trying to point out something in our lives that we need to deal with.

When we focus on removing that "beam" in our eye (or our own problem) we are then in a position to think of the offender in a different light. We see their problem as a burden, and in love, want to help them. Isaiah 58:6, *"Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?"* That's not easy for us, but when it is what God wants, He makes a way.

The good Samaritan chose the right way as we are encouraged

in Luke 10:33-34, *"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him."*

And Jesus gave us His example found in 1 Peter 2:21-25, *"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."* I sometimes take an offence personally. I think the offender wanted to offend, but most times that is not true. They are just on the side of the road beaten by the enemy.

I have to tell you that when these things come along I can get frustrated and sometimes angry, and that's all right, too. It's just what I do with that anger that is important. Ephesians 4:26, *"Be ye angry, and sin not ..."* In myself, I have no way of not joining in with the destructive plans of the enemy, but my Jesus makes His help and strength available to me to war against this.

Consider the same struggle David had with Saul. Saul was busy chasing David with 300 chosen men of Israel, looking to kill him. Wow, how wrong is that? And wasn't David fully within his rights to think that was wrong? But for the most part David was able to keep from letting his carnal nature get away on him - except once when he cut Saul's clothes. The account is in 1 Samuel 24. You see in that instance, David put himself first. Something always goes wrong when we put ourselves ahead of the Lord.

But consider David's heart. After he realized what he had done (touching God's anointed) he not only repented but threw himself at Saul's feet and asked forgiveness. He no longer put himself first (and what he wanted), but he put God first.

You may have noticed something else in that encounter with David and Saul. Once David realized his own error (of touching the Lord's anointed), he was then in that place of humility to be able to talk to Saul about his problem, and he did. Both men were blessed that day. God is so good.

I still like to "cut clothes" when I see a wrong and let my carnal man get away on me. My heart is not perfect towards another when I am wronged, but praise the Lord, Jesus is going to have his way in my heart and in our hearts and make that right too.

You see it doesn't always happen like fast food - order it and it's there. It can happen like that, but often God works with us over time. Praise the Lord!

It starts with you and me today. Before an offence has a chance to fester, forgive it right away. Romans 13:14, *"But put*

ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." If it takes time in prayer, get right to it. You'll be amazed at the results.

Take an inventory in your heart. Is there someone you don't quite feel you could extend open arms in love to, or perhaps still grinding an axe about something they have done?

Jesus is not going to condemn you for that. He sees you like the good Samaritan saw the man on the side of the road, beaten by the devices of the enemy. He is there to bind up your wounds and take care of you. All we have to do is let Him have His way.

Now is the time to avail ourselves of the power of Jesus Christ to forgive anyone in our lives that we may have ill feelings toward. It is time to stop listening to the wrong spirit, that spirit that divides and destroys us, and focus our attention on what the Holy Spirit is telling us. It is time *"To loose the bonds of wickedness, To undo the heavy burdens, To let the oppressed go free..."* (Isaiah 58: 6, NKJV). ✝

A TRIBUTE TO BRO. ALBERT HANNIGAN

A pervasive sense of loss permeated the church universal when, on May 7, 2017 Bro. Albert Hannigan passed from his earthly to his heavenly home. God granted him almost 93 years and in October of 2017, he and Marion would have been blessed with 70 years of marriage. We thank the Lord for his life and for his apostolic ministry, which could be aptly characterized as that of a pastor. Their marriage was an example to us all.

Bro. Hannigan will be remembered for his fatherly ministry, which was evident in visitations to many who were alone or unable to attend church due to their particular circumstances. He was a man of humility, prayer, musical talent and knowledge of Scripture. He faithfully served the church, officiated at numerous funerals and ministered to residents in nursing homes. His accordion and voice of song were constant companions during those visits.

During his time in the ministry, Bro. Hannigan traveled to churches in Canada, the United States, the Philippines, the Caribbean and South Korea. The desire of his heart was to serve the Lord and fulfill the great commission of Christ, *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature"* (Mark 16: 15).

When we think of Bro. Hannigan's dedication to the Lord, to his family and to the church, we are reminded of an attitude that drew no attention to himself, but rather gave glory to the Lord regardless of the circumstances. Many Scriptures represent his life of faithfulness, but here are a couple that are particularly descriptive of his selflessness.

James 5: 16, *"The effective fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."* He prayed for many as a local church elder and later as a universal church father.

Philippians 2: 3, *"Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself."* He always put others ahead of himself as evidenced by his many telephone calls to those who were struggling with sickness or with some other challenge in their lives. He had a sympathetic ear for those in need.

While we will miss his kind and encouraging words, we rejoice in knowing that *"he fought a good fight, has finished the race, has kept the faith"* (2 Timothy 4:7) and has joined that *"great cloud of witnesses that encourage us to run with endurance the race that is set before us"* (Hebrews 12: 1).

To have known him is to have his memory forever etched in our hearts.

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