

Lesson 5: Living Life God's Way

Refusing Bitterness and the Mental Movies

Spiritual truth to be mastered: Constant rejection of accusation and bitterness against self or others and the release of people to God after we have fulfilled our biblical obligations to them.

Why do we need this truth operating in our lives? Without this skill, we will live trapped in the bitterness of the past as we run the “mental movies” of all the perceived injustices and violations of our rights others have committed against us while expecting “more of the same” from current and future relationships.

THURSDAY:

I am committed to forgiving others who have hurt me and to release them to You, Father, for Your redemptive purposes.

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.”

Romans 14:4: “Who are you to judge someone else’s servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand.”

Matthew 11:6: “Blessed is anyone who does not stumble (*skandalizó*) on account of me.” (*skandalizó*: to stumble, trip up, or entrap.)

You are blessed when you deal with a situation you don’t think you should have to deal with, but you keep a root of bitterness from coming up. We must reject the bitterness. Some of us are bitter against all sorts of things and people. Most often, we Christians are bitter against ourselves.

We must also reject accusation (the mental movies). The movies are in the past, but eternal life is in the “now.”

How do we practice this truth?

- Ask the Holy Spirit to make us constantly diligent to reject seeds of bitterness when they are being sown into our minds and hearts.
- Pray for God’s redemption and blessing upon people who have sinned against us or others.

Matthew 18:15-18: “If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

Galatians 6:1-5: “Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. Each one should test their own actions.

Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, for each one should carry their own load.”

Matthew 6:14-15: “For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”

Whatever is operating in someone else’s (sin) is also in you to a greater or lesser degree. Seeing this removes our zeal to judge others. We are all fallen. We all have the “bad stuff” in us. We have the disease. It is our spiritual immune systems that prevent the disease from killing us. Therefore, we must keep our spiritual immune systems healthy by feeding our spirits on God’s Word and spending time with Him.

Everyone has opportunities to be bitter. We cannot afford to be bitter. You must deny these opportunities, for in bitterness, you will lose twice. God’s “randomness” can produce bitterness in us because it is different than our expectations. Jesus “scandalizes” us, and His actions reveal our hearts. Since He already knows our hearts, it must be us that needs to know them.

Satan is anxious to water the seeds of bitterness once they are in you.

Romans 12:14-21: “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. 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. On the contrary: ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Conversation means discovering and asserting. The moment we stop discovering, we move into the “derby.” We posture ourselves to answer and inevitably stop listening. We use silence not to listen, but in preparing to respond.

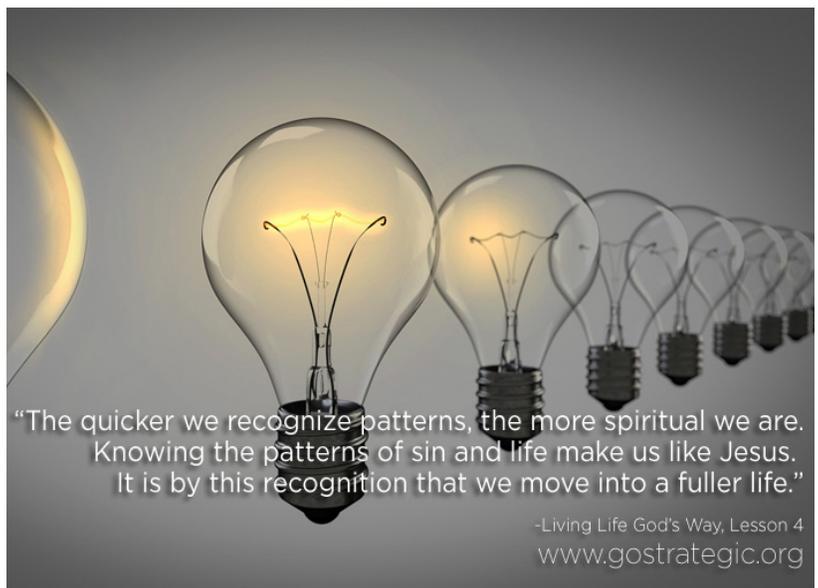
When I get offended with someone, I go into the prison of blame. But the lock is on the inside of the door, not the outside. I am the only one who can let me out. It is a self-imposed sentence. When we stop holding an offense against someone, it drops to the floor. This breaks the pattern of bitterness. The quicker we recognize patterns, the more spiritual we are. Knowing the patterns of sin and life make us like Jesus. It is by this recognition that we move into a fuller life.

Forgiveness is the key in our hand. It will free us from the jail of bitterness. We can’t afford to stay in the prison. We can’t

afford to play the game of “wrong and right.” We must forgive. We must yield our “right” to take revenge.

We must spend time with Jesus to stay awake. We must live and breathe Him and His Word. It is His strength that preserves us in our weakness.

Everyone is given the “right” to be bitter, to seek revenge, and drop out of effective service to God. If we listen to the “accuser,” we will find enough reasons to disqualify others, ourselves, and eventually God. It is the fallen state of man that plays so easily into this pattern. Human nature plays the “blame game,” giving everyone the “right” to be bitter.



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-Living Life God’s Way, Lesson 4
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We get trapped in the bitterness jail when we refuse to follow the Bible's rules on how to resolve conflict. Usually this is the result of ignorance, cowardice, and false views of love and compassion. If you are looking for reasons to live in blame, anger, and accusation, life will give you many opportunities to find them.

Making It Real:

Getting free of the "destruction derby" and the "mental movies" is a matter of choosing the way that leads to life. Often it will come out of these questions:

- Is this the proper time to have this conversation?
- Do we have enough time to fully discuss the problem?
- Are we clear of past offenses or do we have them enough under control to share clearly without hate or seeking revenge?

When you get hit with pain, remember to "post." Ask for God's help to know whether to get a breath and go on, or to call off the conversation until the proper ingredients are there for success.

What is a "Spiritual Hernia?"

A "spiritual hernia" is the condition that occurs due to our ego need to try to help someone God has not called us to help. We must remember that Jesus did not "help" everyone He saw. He did not heal everyone. How did He make that kind of decision? He made it by following the lead of His father. Jesus tells us that He only did what He saw His father doing. We must ask ourselves the question, "Is 'fixing' this person what God is telling me to do?" Is this act within the borders of my spiritual power or authority?

How many times have you tried to "help," and the result was two hurting people instead of one?

Psalm 131:1-3: "My heart is not proud, Lord, my eyes are not haughty; I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me. But I have calmed and quieted myself, I am like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child I am content. Israel, put your hope in the Lord both now and forevermore."

II Corinthians 10:13-16: "We, however, will not boast beyond proper limits, but will confine our boasting to the sphere of service God himself has assigned to us, a sphere that also includes you. We are not going too far in our boasting, as would be the case if we had not come to you, for we did get as far as you with the gospel of Christ. Neither do we go beyond our limits by boasting of work done by others. Our hope is that, as your faith continues to grow, our sphere of activity among you will greatly expand, so that we can preach the gospel in the regions beyond you. For we do not want to boast about work already done in someone else's territory."

To avoid "derbies," we need right attitudes, respectful speech, proper spiritual referees (authority figures/mediators), requests for forgiveness, restitution if necessary, and prayerful release into the power and healing of Christ.

As you reflect on this lesson, pray about it and make notes in your journal. What is the Lord saying, and what are you thinking about today's workout?

