

Joke: Johnny had been misbehaving and was sent to his room. After a while he emerged and informed his mother that he had thought it over and then said a prayer.

"Fine", said the pleased mother. "If you ask God to help you not misbehave, He will help you."

"Oh, I didn't ask Him to help me not misbehave," said Johnny. "I asked Him to help you put up with me."

Baggage - Week 1 - Let it Go

I have learned that there are certain things in my life that I simply need to let go of in order to grow in my walk with Christ. And I don't think it's just me, there most likely is a few things in your life you need to let go of before you get to where God desires you to be as well..

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

Listen to how The Passion Translation says it. . .

Ephesians 4:31–32 (TPT): Lay aside bitter words, temper tantrums, revenge, profanity, and insults. 32 But instead be kind and

affectionate toward one another. Has God graciously forgiven you? Then graciously forgive one another in the depths of Christ's love.

Now I would love to tell you that in these areas I have arrived. But truth is just a couple weeks ago at work. I came to a machine that was a mess, stuff all over my table, frustrated to no end and I even let some of my frustration be seen by letting some that would listen hear about the one who can't seem to clean up after himself.

And so, God is still working with me in few areas of my life. Thank you Jesus for that.

What I have learned as well is that far too many people walk around carrying heavy baggage from years of mistakes, hurt, pain, bad choices, or other things that have happened to them or around them.

But here's the good news, in Jesus, there is no condemnation for our past mistakes because we are given the gift of eternal grace.

Romans 8:1–2 (NIV): Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, 2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.

Romans 8:1–2 (TPT): So now the case is closed. There remains no accusing voice of condemnation against those who are joined in life-union with Jesus, the Anointed One. 2 For the "law" of the

Spirit of life flowing through the anointing of Jesus has liberated us from the “law” of sin and death.

It’s time to unpack all the worthless weight we’re carrying around and learn to live free.

Some of the baggage we carry around with us like bitterness and anger is because of past pain and frustration.

And the truth is this can spill over into our current and our future relationships which ultimately will create some collateral damage.

We have to let it go. We have to choose forgiveness and repentance in order to be kind, tenderhearted, and loving toward others.

Let’s begin our new 3-week series by learning to let it go.

Let me start with point number 1. I think that’s always a good place to begin. Point number 1 is. . .

Know the Issue

Obviously, to let go of an issue, we must first understand what the issue or situation is.

In the Ephesians passage we read a few minutes ago, Paul identifies 7 specific things believers need to “get rid of.” They are:

- Bitterness

- Rage
- Anger
- Brawling
- Slander
- Every form of malice
- Unforgiveness

And honestly, this is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the range of negative emotions, the feelings and attitudes we often carry around with us.

But where do they all come from? Surely it's not like people just wake up in the morning and decide to be bitter or angry.

I've never heard anyone say, "I sure hope someone does something awful to me today - just so I can withhold forgiveness from them!" Or be angry all day long at them. Never heard that.

And yet, if we're honest about it, there are many of us who silently hold bitterness, anger, envy, or a score of other non healthy things in our hearts towards others.

So, the first step to letting it go is identifying what you're carrying around.

You need to. . .

Bring it Into the Light

Dr. Phil puts it like this. . .you can't change what we won't acknowledge.

Once you've identified areas of baggage the next obvious step is to do something about it - to get rid of it... To let it go.

But thanks be to God that His plan for you is much bigger than just letting it go and being done with it. Papa is interested in healing, restoring, and seeing you walk in freedom.

John 10:10 (NIV): The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

In the book of Colossians the apostle Paul says that you have been rescued from the dominion of darkness - that you and I share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

Let's look at it. . .

Colossians 1:9–14 (NIV): For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, 10 so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, 11 being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, 12 and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.

13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Things like bitterness, anger, malice, slander, unforgiveness, they are all characteristics of this world's system but not of the kingdom of light.

As a matter of fact His kingdom is totally opposite. . .

Romans 14:17 (NIV): For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,

It's not that the emotions are bad. God created them, but when they get out of hand, when used in the wrong way they become an issue.

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

1 Peter 5:7 (NIV): Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

As believers, it is so important for us to consider the "fruit" we are producing.

Galatians 5:22–23 (NIV): But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

When we identify and recognize the rotten fruit - the baggage if you will - we bring it into the light. We confess and ask forgiveness and that sometimes means we need to extend forgiveness to others.

And God, who is faithful and just, forgives and purifies.

I know this all sounds amazing and wonderful. Who doesn't want to walk in the freedom of the light, unhindered by excess baggage?

So, what do you do when the baggage seems is too big, too heavy, too difficult to work through?

Trust the Process

Hear this church, I too have struggled with some baggage issues. For years I had an anger issue it's still not totally gone but it is so much better thanks be to God and the counsel of the Holy Spirit and friends to help me through the process.

I've learned some things in the process.

I've learned some things from King Solomon. Listen to what he has to say. . .

Proverbs 19:20 (NIV): Listen to advice and accept discipline, and at the end you will be counted among the wise.

Proverbs 20:18 (NIV): Plans are established by seeking advice; so if you wage war, obtain guidance.

I still have friends that I go to for Godly counsel on some of my life's decisions. And I even have some that come to me for my advice for something they are seeking guidance for as well.

The process of letting go can be a long and sometimes even difficult.

The process of coming into the light might not be a simple hop-skip-and jump from one place to another. There may be times when the baggage feels too heavy.

That's when we remind ourselves; with God all things are possible, and we must be willing to trust the process.

1 Thessalonians 4:3 says it this way, "It is God's will that you should be sanctified." And the process of sanctification is not an over night accomplishment.

Not a day.

Not a week.

Not a 3 month internship at your childhood summer camp.

Not a 20-year journey in local church leadership.

It's not any one of those things - it's all of them. The process of sanctification is ALL of life and God uses all kinds of situations and circumstances to constantly conform us into the image of His Son.

With this in mind, let me ask you a question today.

Do you trust Him?

Do you trust that He has a plan and a purpose for your life? That He will work it all together for good? That there may be situations the enemy meant for evil, and yet God will use these for His good in your life?

If the answer is yes, then let go of the baggage and get moving.

Today is as good a day as any to say goodbye to the baggage, the anger, the bitterness you've been holding onto its time to let it all go.

As we wrap up today, I want to draw your attention back to the words of Jesus in John chapter 10. This is what Jesus explains to the disciples:

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

Some translations say, "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."

The enemy wants to steal, kill, and destroy you. One of the ways this can be accomplished is by weighing you down with so much trouble and baggage through life that you simply cannot move forward.

But Jesus has come that we might experience abundant and full life in the light of the kingdom.

Hebrews 12:1–3 (NIV): Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Do you trust Him?

Do you trust He has a plan and a purpose for your life? That He will work it all together for good? That there may be situations that the enemy meant for evil, that God will use for His good in your life?

Throw off the baggage weighing you down.

Run the race of freedom.

Live in the light.

Let's pray.

Join us next week for a new thing. Same series just called a new thing.