

Grudge (Bitterness)

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. Hebrews 12:15

The Basic Bible Truth

Bitterness is an ugly thing. It can destroy more than just the life of the one carrying it around. It starts small, and essentially grows out of the fact that we fail to forgive others. The hurt becomes something we go back to over and over again—needlessly. In a nutshell: We have been forgiven much by God. We should forgive others in like manner.

The Object

A Large Box Or Canister Bound By Chains And Padlocks
Yellow Danger or Caution Tape
A Pair Of Welding Gloves
A Mop Head With Googly Eyes Attached



Place the mop head in the canister or box, and then chain everything down to look very foreboding and dangerous. Place a few danger signs or stretch some caution tape, keeping people away from your location.

The Lesson

Ladies and gentlemen, today I have with me one of the world's most dangerous creatures. This thing really scares me. I've seen them from time to time in their natural habitat, but they tend to destroy everything they touch. I keep this one locked away so that it can't get out and hurt anybody. They always want to be fed and then carried around. They like to be held. Oh, how they love to be held. Anyone who decides to carry one will be in for a sorrowful time. Misery, bitterness, and anger follows everyone who entertains the idea of keeping one of these. I highly recommend that if you obtain one, never, never, entertain the thought of keeping it. It will destroy you.

You may be wondering just what is it that I have in this container? If you are all careful and quiet, I'll get this one out and show you just what this hideous thing looks like. Remember, it is going to want to be held. Do not hold it. It will want to be carried. Do not carry it. It will want to be fed. Do not feed it. I will have to put these heavy duty gloves on to try to bring this thing out into the open. Unlocking all of these padlocks and removing these chains should show you how dangerous I believe this creature is.

This ladies and gentlemen is...a grudge. Have you ever seen a grudge? I'll bet you have met someone who has one. They are nasty, aren't they. This one really wants to be held and fed and carried. Like I warned you before. Never carry a grudge. Never feed a grudge. And never hold a grudge. They will make you angry and miserable.

Sometimes we foolishly think that we have the ability to get one of these grudges and keep it as we might a pet. We might go into the garage and visit it once in a great while, but invariably, our visits become more frequent. Soon it is allowed into the house, followed by sitting beside us in the Den and even sleeping on the foot of the bed. A grudge is never satisfied until it is front and center in our lives. And therein lies the real problem.

There is only one way to get rid of a grudge. Forgive as Jesus forgave you. I read a phrase once that I thought was an interesting way of looking at this idea of holding a grudge. Harboring a grudge is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die. Grudges lead to bitterness and bitterness roots itself deeply into our lives.

That deeply rooted bitterness was addressed by Moses in Deuteronomy 29 to remind the children of Israel that God must remain in first place in their hearts. To turn away from forgiving another, one of the basic concepts of our faith, is as dangerous as the individual who turns their back on God completely and follows idols. But, do we follow idols? Ezekiel talked of idols of the heart. Anything that we allow into our lives that removes God from His rightfully deserved first place is like putting a crafted wood or gold idol on our mantle above the fireplace in our home.

One of the most basic, foundational, practices that we must learn to observe always is the idea that we **MUST** forgive others, because we have been forgiven much by God. Forgiveness is a life sentence. What I mean by that is that when we forgive, we cannot under any circumstances ever again reach back down and pick up that hurt or bitterness and "unforgive" someone. God forgave us and removed our sins *as far as the east is from the west*. We must forgive others with the same criteria in place.

One very simple practice that we can put in place to avoid the risk of bitterness taking root is prayer. When we pray sincerely for someone who might have wronged us, it becomes increasingly more difficult to carry a grudge against them. We find ourselves beginning to express our concern and ultimately our love for them in our prayers, and that leads to showing and expressing love to them outwardly as well. Jesus made a point of telling His disciples that they were to forgive 70 times 7. His point was not that we forgive 490 times, but that our patience and forgiveness with our fellow man must be extreme. How many times has God forgiven us? 490 times might get most of us through about a year and a third.

