

poison and waiting for the other person to die." In the end, bitterness will destroy you from the inside out. *"Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord; looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled"* (Hebrews 12:14-15).

Disobedience - This is flat out rebellion, when we know what is right but just don't want to do it, either because we don't think we can do it or because it doesn't seem fair. In so doing, we choose our way over God's way. We know the Scriptures tell us to "love our neighbor as ourselves," but it's too hard.

HOW TO CHANGE

Repent. When we realize that we have failed to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, failed to accept what He has allowed in our life, or failed to love our neighbors as ourselves, we must repent because we have sinned against God. *"In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength"* (Isaiah 30:15 NIV). *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9).

Pray. Ask God to change you. *"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:6-7).

Check your second thought. You must choose what you are going to allow yourself to think about. You may not be able to stop the first thought but you can choose what you are going to do next. Will you dwell on the negative or choose to think positively?

Be thankful. Begin a gratitude journal. List things in your life for which you can be thankful, or positive things about others for which you can be thankful. Focus on God's goodness and His faithfulness, not on your circumstances or others.

Change is possible. Not until the pain of staying the same is greater than the pain of changing will we ever change. Start today.

FOOTNOTE

¹ Scripture references are taken from the New King James Version of the Holy Bible

DIGGING DEEPER

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ACCEPTANCE



Acceptance

A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Acceptance

Discontentment, anger, frustration, distraction, worry, strife, depression, etc., can all be indicative of a person who has failed to accept God, his circumstances, or other people. Matthew 22:37-39, *"Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it; you shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"*¹ These two commandments sum up all the other commandments. If we are to "love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul and with all our mind" first we must know Him for Who He is, as He is. It is only against that backdrop of truth that we can move on to accept our circumstances and to accept others.

ACCEPTING OUR CIRCUMSTANCES

Without a shadow of a doubt, it is our attitude about our circumstances that will make or break us. It has been said that life is 10% what happens to us and 90% how we respond to it. In other words, life is a lot more about our attitude than about what actually happens to us.

Our propensity when we don't like our circumstances is to complain. To complain is to "express grief, pain or discontent." Complaining is not only sin, it is an expression of dissatisfaction with God. Ultimately, it is God who orchestrates the events and people in our lives. If we are unsatisfied, we are essentially saying, "God, You are not doing right by us." The Israelites are the epitome of Old Testament complainers. They were barely out of Egypt when they started complaining. To see their pattern of complaining read the book of Exodus.

"Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have

you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt?
– EXODUS 14:11

"If only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death." – EXODUS 16:3

If only ... we had water. If only ... we had food. If only ... we had meat. If only ... we had a king. If only ... I had a better job. If only ... I had a bigger house. If only ... I had obedient children. If only ... I had a wife who respects me. If only ... What is the "If only" in your life?

Another thing we tend to do when we don't like our circumstances is to worry. This is not the "If onlys" it is the "What ifs ...". What if ... I lose my job? What if ... I never get married? What if ... I can't pay my bills? Keep in mind that the "What if" question has an answer. It is ... "then God." God's grace is sufficient for the moment, not a moment too soon or a moment too late.

God uses our circumstances to bring us to Jesus Christ. Once we are in Christ He uses our circumstances to grow us in Christ-likeness. Romans 8:28-29, *"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son..."* Once we are in Christ, He uses our circumstances to grow a deeper relationship with Him.

"But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in

Once we are in Christ He uses our circumstances to grow our relationship with Him deeper.

God uses our circumstances to bring us to Jesus Christ.

Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead." – PHILIPPIANS 3:7-11

God is using circumstances and people in our lives to accomplish His work to conform us to the image of Jesus Christ.

ACCEPTING OTHERS

Let's face it, all of us have people who rub us the wrong way, and if we are honest, there are people that we rub the wrong way, too. Our acceptance of others is based in God's acceptance of us. *"To the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved"* (Ephesians 1:6). So, what hinders us from accepting other people?

HERE ARE FIVE HINDRANCES TO ACCEPTING OTHERS:

Pride - thinking more highly of myself than I ought. *"Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself"* (Philippians 2:3). Pride is thinking more of myself than of others.

Self-righteousness - setting a standard of righteousness for myself and others, and expecting them to live up to it. When they fail to do so, I do not accept them.

Anger - Anger is a result of not getting our own way. *"Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war..."* (James 4:1-2). *"Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you"* (Ephesians 4:31-32).

Unforgiveness - Bitterness is rooted in an unforgiving heart. It has been said, "Unforgiveness is like drinking