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#1400

### Baggage: *How To Get Rid Of Anger*

Two weeks ago 15 of us took off for the country of Guyana, in South America. We went there to do a variety of ministries. We held a VBS for over 100 children, we visited an old folks home and took them gifts, Sandy held a ladies seminar which involved crafts, we sang in churches and schools, and visited in a hospital.

Everyone took 2 pieces of baggage. Actually we took 3. A carry on, our own personal stuff, and ministry supplies. Each bag could weigh 50 pounds and we took them right up to the edge. We had keyboards, guitars, amplifiers, PA speakers, puppet stage with puppets, cords wires, VBS projects, ladies crafts, and any little toys we could cram in.

Believe me, everybody knew they had baggage. No one said, "Hey, I've only got a hundred pounds to carry. Can I take someone else's baggage too." We all helped each other but we knew we had baggage. It weighed us down. It made us tired. The longer we carried it the heavier it seemed to get.

Why is it when it comes to traveling we all know about our baggage. When it comes to traveling we don't have any question that our baggage is weighing us down? The baggage is there the baggage is real and the baggage is weighing us down.

But when it comes to the baggage of life, we're clueless. Friends say to us, "Dude, you're carrying some real baggage there," and we blow them off. Who are they to tell us how to run our lives? Who rate they to judge us? After all. nobody's perfect.

But just as sure as we're loaded down with baggage at the airport, we're all carrying around our share of emotional/ spiritual baggage.

Where does it come from? Some comes from our childhood. Mom or Dad told us we were worthless and we'd never amount to anything. Some comes from those teenage years where we were kind of gangly and goofy looking and acting. Our friends might have put us down. Our teachers might have told us we were losers.

But baggage doesn't always come from outside ourselves. A lot of baggage accumulates in our life because we want to do life our way instead of God's way. We hold onto anger and jealousy. Bitterness takes over.

We compensate with drugs and alcohol. Guilt overwhelms us. Fear and worry weigh us down. We all do it to one degree or another. We pick up a bag here and another there. It happens slowly over time. But one day we find ourselves burdened down by the very baggage we've willingly picked up along the way.

And let me just say this. I'm not thinking of anybody in particular here in this congregation right now. I don't try to put people of guilt trips on people from the pulpit. But you know who some of the

biggest baggage handlers in then church are? Let me give you a hint, they're not the 20 or 30 year olds. They have they're share but more often than not it's our senior saints..

Maybe it's because they've had a lot longer to accumulate baggage or maybe they came from a generation in which you never got real about your own struggles.

Today we're starting a series that I believe will lighten the load of a lot of people in this congregation. We're simply calling it "Baggage." We're going to talk about the stuff we try to hide and ignore and deny.

Our theme today is Baggage: *How To Get Rid Of Anger.*

I'll tell you why I'm starting with this one today. After 31 years of doing ministry I honestly believe the number one piece of baggage that weighs people down is anger. So I figured I start wi the hardest one first. Here's why. If we can all get some hope from the Bible in dealing with the hardest thing of all I believe well be a lot more encouraged to stick through this series and tackle the other areas in our lives.

If we can feel that burden of anger begin to lift it's going to give us hope for the rest of those suitcases we're carrying around. So hopefully on this first day we're already going to see there's light at the end of the tunnel.

I want to read you a Time Magazine article castled *The Revolt of Leo Held*. This article is about one man, but I want you to understand you could substitute the names of a hundred different men and women who have been down the same road Mr Held walked. We read their names in the paper. We sew their reports on TV, but it's not so often that we get such a detailed look into any of their lives.

The article starts this way: There was almost nothing in Loe Held's life that could have presaged the end of it. Held, 40, a burly 6 foot, 200 pound, balding lab technician at Lockhaven Pa, paper mill, had been a school board member, Boy Scout leader, Secretary of a Fire Brigade, church-goer, and affectionate father.

Certainly he bickered occasionally with his neighbors, drove too aggressively, and sometimes fretted about his job that he held for 19 years. But to most of his neighbors and co-workers he was a paragon of a responsible, respectable citizen.

That image was shattered in a well planned hour of bloodshed when Held decidrs to out a one man revolt against there world he feared sand resented. After seeing his wife off to work and their children to school, Held pocketed 2 pistols, a 45 automatic and a 38 Smith and Weston and drove his r to the mill.

He gripped a gun in each hand and stalked into the plant. With cold calculation he filled his fellow workers with 2 sand 3 shots apiece.

Puzzled officials discovered a tenuous chain of logic behind his actions. Mrs. Ram had quit a car pool, complaining of Hed's driving. Many of the victims at the paper plant were in authority over

him had been promoted while Held had not.

As it turns out he had feuded with neighbors about burning leaves. He had become so enraged at another neighbor that he beat the 71 year old lady with a branch, She took him to court and the magistrate threw out the charges.

His neighbor lady commented, "If the jury had just thought a little more carefully they would have realized that Held was a sick man and sent him to a Psychiatrist and maybe all this could have been prevented,

Here's the \$64,000 question. Was Leo Held real sick, Wittingly or unwittingly Time answered the question. The caption under a picture of the killer after he was shot read, Responsible, Respectable, and Resentful.

It was like Time Magazine put it's finger on the real problem. Leo Held was not sick. He wasn't mentally ill. He was a man who carried the baggage of angry and resentment until one day it just got too heavy for him to carry anymore.

Isn't it interesting, though, that the neighbors first thought was "He's sick and he needs a Psychiatrist."

Actually the Bible spoke to Leo Held's condition long before anybody even thought of modern Psychology. In fact 2800 years before Sigmund Freud's parents had even met God spelled out Leo Held's condition in the Bible.

This is from Proverbs 26:23-26 *Smooth talk from an evil heart is like glaze on cracked pottery. Your enemy shakes hands and greets you like an old friend, all the while conniving against you. When he speaks warmly to you, don't believe him for a minute; he's just waiting for the chance to rip you off. No matter how cunningly he conceals his malice, eventually his evil will be exposed in public.*

Here's the real deal. Leo held had everybody fooled. He was able to cover up his resentment with an outer gloss of tranquility. He spoke at church and to his boy scout troops with smooth lips.

Leo Held wasn't gripped with some strange form of mental illness. He was being eaten up from the inside out by anger and resentment and one day it just all poured out with a vengeance.

Early on I bought into the psychological model myself. I thought the only way someone could murder his co workers is if he was emotionally ill. What I found out was His emotions were working just fine.

Now fortunately none of us in here are likely to go on a rampage at work and kill everybody we don't like. That does not mean though that those same factors of glossed over bitterness and smoothed over anger aren't churning around inside of us.

Let me ask you this. How do you handle those often minor annoyances at home and at work? How do you handle things when you think "I told him a thousand times not to throw his dirty socks in the

closet" or "I've asked her for weeks not to leave her half empty coffee cups sitting in the living room.:

How do you price things like that?

You say, "No big deal. I get annoyed but that's as far as it goes."

I'll guarantee you many of Leo Held's annoyances that were smoldering under the surface seemed pretty minor and petty at the time. But isn't it amazing how those little annoyances can fester like an untreated wound.

One time I had a nasty cut on my hand but I didn't want to go to the doctor. I figured, what's he going to do anyway? I can take care of this myself. Two weeks later when my hand was the size of a baseball and hurt like the dickens I thought, "Gee Ed this might be a good time to see the doc". Of course by then he had to practice the equivalent of some medieval torture on me which hurt way more than it would have had just gone in the first place.

Physical wounds are like spiritual wounds. If we don't take care of them they can lead to some pretty painful situations for us and for the people around us.

### *I. Anger Itself Isn't Sin*

#### **Turn to Ephesians 4 Page 1040 Read verse 26**

The Bible makes a fascinating statement about anger here. Notice it doesn't say anger is sin. Did you know that God is angry? Psalm 7:11 *God is angry with the wicked every day.* You find the phrase "the anger of the Lord" used over 30 times in the Bible.

When Jesus turned the money changers' tables over in the temple He was angry.

Here's the difference. When I'm angry at the guy who just cut me off in traffic is that righteous or unrighteous anger? If I'm angry with my wife because I think she didn't do something the way I wanted it done, is that righteous or unrighteous anger?

What makes the difference? If I'm angry because I just saw a report about a child that had been molested, that's righteous anger. That's God's kind of anger. We should be angry when the righteous suffer, when the weak are exploited, when sinful men get their way at the expense of the innocent.

That's a righteous concern about others. If I'm angry because I feel slighted I'm not even to let the sun go down on that anger. I'm to deal with that kind of anger through forgiveness and talking things out.

All emotions, including anger, were created by God. All emotions can be used constructively when we use them the way God intended,

When Jesus was angry at the money changers in the temple, He wasn't angry because they somehow hurt Him. He was angry because they were defiling the very temple of God.

All emotions can be constructive including anger. But any emotion can be destructive if we don't follow the biblical directions.

It's like getting a prescription for antibiotics from your doctor. If you take it according to plan, it's constructive. If you go home and say, "What's that doctor know? I'm going to hurry up the process and take the whole bottle at once", what could have been constructive now has become destructive.

Your emotions are the same, especially anger. That's why for every positive verse of anger there's 50 warning verses about anger getting out of hand.

*I. Anger Itself Isn't Sin*

*II. What You Do With Anger Can Be Sinful*

There's 2 major wrong responses to anger that we've all fallen into.

1. Blowing up

**Turn to Proverbs 15 Page 572 Read verse 18**

**Proverbs 25:28**

**Proverbs 29:11**

**Proverbs 29:20**

Here we will on this one. The Bible says the Fruit of the Spirit is Self-Control. When the psychiatrist tells you to let out your anger by beating on a pillow and thinking of the person you're angry at as you do he or she is not giving you constructive biblical direction, you may be letting off steam, but you're not dealing with your anger. You're feeding it.

2. The second major wrong response is the opposite of blowing up. We call it clamming up. There's people who have no problem letting the sun come down on their wrath. In fact they'd just as soon as let every day go by without having to face the problem.

What happened in Leo Held's life is a vivid illustration of clamming up. In the New Testament there was a woman named Herodias. She was the wife of a man named Philip who happened to be King Herod's brother. King Herod took a liking to her so he took Herodias from Philip and married her.

John the Baptist was kind of an outspoken guy so he told Herod he was in sin to take his brother's wife. In Mark 16:19 it says *Therefore Herodias held it against John*. Literally the Greek says she had it in for John, Like Leo Held she crammed all her anger down inside until one day she had John beheaded,

Here's where this can really hit home. There are Christians who hold grudges for years against fellow believers. Sometimes for years.

And here's the ultimate irony. They get upset, agitated, disrupted, frustrated, and their whole life is disrupted. They're not free but the person they're angry with goes through life without a care in the world.

God's instructions cut through all the excuses and confusion. Don't let one day pass with unresolved anger in your hearts. And in the middle of all this remember this biblical principle: *Love covers over a multitude of sins.* (1 Peter 4:8)

There's plenty of things that can be covered by love and don't even need to be brought up, but if they can't be covered by love they certainly won't be covered by your blankets. Time alone doesn't heal all wounds.

*I. Anger Itself Isn't Sin*

*II. What You Do With Anger Can Be Sinful*

*III. Forgive Others As God For Christ Sake Has Forgiven You*

Here's where things can really get tough. **Read Eph 4:32**

How does God forgive us? It's so hard for us to get it so Jesus tells a parable to illustrate just what He means.

**Turn to Matthew 18 page 868**

Matthew 18 is all about restoration. First Jesus says you peruse the lost sheep. You leave the others to go after the lost one. Then He tells us to go after the person whose offended us so we can forgive and mend the relationship.

This prompts Peter to ask "how many times should I forgive?" To that Jesus gives His famous answer of 70 X 7.

In the very next verse Jesus illustrates what He 's been talking about.

**Read verses 23-27**

Just so we don't miss the point Jesus says this guys debt was millions of dollars. Actually it was closer to 2. This is hyperbole with a purpose. A million dollars didn't even compute with His hearers, But notice the king freely forgives him the whole amount.

He did it freely, without compulsion. And without demands,.

**Read 28-35**

Follow this. God says your offence against me is immeasurable. You guys can't even fathom the ugliness of your sin against me. You can't even compute the cost.

That's why I used such a high figure. Now if you're willing to accept my forgiveness than you can do nothing less than forgive others.

"Yea. Lord but you don't know what they said about me."

"Yea Lord but you don't know how they've cheated mer."

"Lord, you don't get it. That trusted person sexually abused me as a child and now they're asking forgiveness, I can't do it they've hurt me too deeply.

We have hurt God more deeply than we'll know this side of eternity. You know what He's saying here? He's saying. "How dare you refuse to forgive one another. How dare you walk around stuffing all your offences down until one day you just blow up at your spouse, or your kids, or your boss, or your pastor, or whoever.

Forgiveness is a threefold promise. It's a promise to the person who offended you that you won't bring up the offence to use as a weapon in future arguments. It's a promise that you're not going to bring it up to your friends as gossip, Then number 3, it's a promise that you're not going to bring it up to your self and play it over and over again in your mind.

We can forgive. We can't just forget but we can forgive biblically the way God for Christ's sake has forgiven us.

Here it is in all its glory and all its horror at the same time:

*God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who has faith in him will have eternal life and never really die. John 3:16 CEV*