

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke on you and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and my load is not hard to carry.” (Matthew 11:28-30)

We've all had experiences that have weighed us down. Unkind words spoken to us, betrayal of trust, disappointment in our accomplishments, disillusionment with God, and on and on the list goes. In this world Jesus assured us we will have trouble and suffering (John 16:33). No one escapes the hurtful effects of sin and as a result we all have painful memories we'd rather forget. But what happens when we don't?

It doesn't take long for that pain to rot into bitterness and anger. Everyone we talk to agrees we've been wronged. How can we be expected to just get over it? The resentment feels justified and we hold tightly to our "right" to hold a grudge.

But as people created in the image of a holy and perfect God we are called to something greater than animal instincts. The bitterness we nurse in our hearts takes root and grows until it strangles the good, and quenches the Holy Spirit's redeeming work. Our selfish desires to harbor the injustices give birth to sin and sin leads to death (James 1:15). The death of our spiritual lives soon overflows to poison other relationships, usually beginning with people closest to us like family and dear friends.

True life and peace comes when we die to our selfish selves and fully embrace our identity in Christ. As his children, we know the battle against sin is already won and some day we will see with our own eyes the glory of God. We don't hold on to bitterness and resentment because those experiences cannot compare to the joy of knowing God's love for us. Freedom is in letting go. The chains that anchor our wounded souls in the pits are not holding us; we are holding them. God asks us to loosen our grip and take his hand instead. Then we will have life and have it abundantly.

What are some wounds you've been holding on to?

Take a moment to write down all the baggage you're carrying tonight. Think about all the junk you walked in here with, and write it down on the paper. Think about what you don't want to carry anymore, what you're willing to give to God this night. Write down what gets in the way of you getting closer to God and to being the best version of yourself. Just write it all down – and let it go.

When you've finished writing, simply fold up the paper, and bring it to the front so you can put it in the suitcase. Then return to your places and quietly pray, asking God to help you truly leave your baggage with Him.

We can't move beyond ourselves and into life in Christ without the Holy Spirit's help. Ask God to help you put down your bags, once and for all, so that you can know the rest he promises.