

20 Days of Trouble

Topic #9 – Regret

Textbook Def:

To feel sorrow or remorse for an act, fault, disappointment, decision, etc. To think of with a sense of loss.*

Real-Life Look:

The moment the words spilled from Nancy's mouth she knew she was sorry, but the damage was done. Sure, she could apologize, but she could never erase what was spoken. Her husband just stared at her, speechless, with pain-filled eyes. *"Why can't I just keep my big mouth shut,"* she thought.

As Bob was signing on the dotted line, he knew it felt wrong, but he'd wanted a bigger camper for such a long time. It was only a few hundred more a month than the current one, and the family would be much more comfortable, he rationalized. Still, there was a tugging he couldn't ignore. But unfortunately, he did.

It was a horrible morning! The kids were moving altogether too slowly, they were fighting more than usual, and Danny lost his homework. Natalie's nose started bleeding and Hannah had forgotten to buy bread the day before for the kids' lunches. So she did what every normal Momma does from time to time. She snapped. Bigtime. As she was pulling into the school driveway, she began to apologize, but there wasn't enough time to really talk and make amends. The kids piled out of the van leaving her with a huge sense of guilt. She just wanted to scoop them up, take them home, and start over. This was going to be a very, very long day.

The man was sitting there all by himself. Something told Nick that he should go speak with him but he was in a rush, and heck, what would he say to him anyway? So he ignored the prompt and hurried on his way. Hours later, he still couldn't get this guy out of his head. He felt awful.

So many years have been lost. The regret knotted up in John's belly for wasted time was palpable. How could he get it back? Make up for it in some way? He felt lost and ashamed, and oh so very sorry.

Sword of the Spirit:

“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?” Isaiah 43:18-19

“I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten...” Joel 2:25

“Say not, ‘Why were the former days better than these?’ For it is not from wisdom that you ask this.” Ecc 7:10

Breaking It Down:

Writing about regret comes incredibly easy for me. Why? Because I have experienced so darn much of it!

One of the biggest regrets I wrestle with has to do with my husband. Why didn't I meet him earlier in life? Why couldn't we have had kids together? Wouldn't it be grand if we were going to celebrate 26 years of marriage this year instead of just 6?

These thoughts have swirled through my head since the day I fell in love with him. So much regret for wasted time, awful choices, and bad relationships. And as much as my hubby doesn't spend much time lamenting over the past, he has often expressed the same sentiment to me. *“Do you know how much further along in life we could be if we'd met twenty years ago?”* Why yes, I do actually.

Then of course logic sets in. If we had met earlier, we wouldn't have the kids we have now, we might not have been able to stand each other twenty years ago, and perhaps, we needed to walk through the experiences we did in order to arrive at the place of love and appreciation we're in now.

This circular argument with myself, as well as many other instances with regret, has taught me much.

Regret can't change the past but it sure can improve the future.

For instance, with my husband:

- Reflecting on what I didn't have in the past versus what I'm blessed to have now instills an incredible sense of thankfulness. This has helped me manage the challenges of marriage (and let's be honest, every marriage has trials, regardless of how wonderful it may be the majority of the time!) with far more ease than if I didn't have the mindset I'm fortunate enough to have now.

- Personal experience allows me to coach others with more wisdom and heart than I would have had otherwise. While it may not change my past, it enables me to impart advice to others which might prevent future regret in their lives.

Do you see how this approach can turn a negative into a positive? We should almost be grateful for regret! Well, almost...

How could you apply this attitude towards other real-life scenarios?

Regret might:

- Discipline you to keep your mouth shut, or at the very least, have a more respectful and constructive approach. *Win!*
- Encourage patience and calmness. *Win!*
- Prevent overspending or compulsive purchases. *Win!*
- Thwart missed opportunities. *Win!*
- Inspire a greater sense of blessing and appreciation. *Win!*

The Benefit in Decluttering Trouble:

If you can't change the past, why waste time and energy living in regret? It does no good. Instead, learn from your mistakes and take a proactive, positive approach. Pave the way for less future regret, more satisfaction, and loads of 'Wins'!

The personal benefits are great. Decluttering regret brings freedom. Freedom to make different, better choices. Freedom to embrace more positive results. Freedom to enjoy increased blessings.

Decluttering regret also gives you the freedom and ability to bless others. Set a great example, share wisdom, and bring glory to God's Kingdom by helping others.

The despair felt when you can't un-speak words, un-sign your name, or un-do a tragic moment are haunting. There are no automatic rewind buttons in life. We do, however, have the choice to do things differently the next time around. Making the most of that opportunity is the surest way to combat regret and halt it from stealing any more of your joy than it already has.

Say NO to regret and YES to freedom!

*dictionary.reference.com

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