

Living In The Overflow of God's Love

Love keeps no record of wrongs

I want to ask you a question this morning. In light of the lessons-- "Living in the overflow of God's love," do you find yourself longing to live in the overflow of God's love. Do you find yourself wanting to change your life? You can you know... you can by changing your mind (repent).

Eph. 4:22-23 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Life circumstances have a way of preventing us from living in the overflow of God's love. Life has a way of dumping of lot of junk on us.

- Maybe your husband works too much
- Perhaps your wife gripes too much
- Or your boss expects way too much
- And yes, it could be that your kids whine too much
- And what about the people who have slandered you
- Or the people who have gossiped about you

What's the result of this kind of junk dumping? We begin to store box after box of junk. If we're not careful, we'll find ourselves carrying load after load of anger...

- Guilt
- Pessimism
- Bitterness
- Anxiety
- Deceit
- Impatience

This kind of junk slopping that happens in our lives affects us. This kind of junk infects our relationships. Look at Cain. It infected his relationship with Abel. Cain had a heart full of anger before he ever had his hands stained with blood. Or what about the Pharisees? They killed Jesus in their hearts long before they ever nailed him to a cross.

Max Lucado: Today's thoughts are tomorrow's actions

Today's jealousy is tomorrow's temper tantrum

Today's anger is tomorrow's abuse

Today's lust is tomorrow's adultery

Today's greed is tomorrow's embezzlement

Today's guilt is tomorrow's fear

Max is right; today's thoughts are tomorrow's actions.

On a Saturday afternoon 1997, 13-year-old Michael Hirschbeck put on his Cleveland Indians batboy uniform and went looking for his hero. His hero is Roberto Alomar, the All-Star second baseman who made a lot of us baseball fans angry in the fall of 1996 by spitting in the face of an umpire who had just called him out on strikes. When Michael found him, he threw his arms around him and gave him a big hug.

Here's what's startling about this encounter. Michael is the son of John Hirschbeck— the umpire Alomar spat on that awful day. Alomar apologized for what he did, and Hirschbeck publicly forgave him and committed himself to a process of healing and restoration. The baseball player has since worked to support the umpire's foundation to find a cure for a rare disease of the brain

(adrenoleukodystrophy or ALD) that took the life of Hirschbeck's 8-year-old son John Drew in 1993. Michael has the same genetic disorder.

"Maybe God put us in this world to help somebody beat this disease," says Alomar – ironically. Who knows, maybe he did. Or it could be that he put them in this world to remind us of the grace that touches all that witness it in seeing the offended embrace the offender.

The Apostle Paul tells us that **Love... keeps no record of wrongs** (1 Cor. 13:5NIV).

Keeping a record of wrongs is really being a junk collector. It would be better if we never allowed this junk into our lives in the first place. If we keep no records we refuse to collect junk-- and when we refuse to collect junk, we live a life that reflects Jesus and the unconditional love he has for us.

Some people have no idea that we have an option other than record keeping. We say things like "Don't talk to me, I'm in a bad mood." We say things like this sometimes as if the bad mood were something assigned to us and out of our control rather than an emotion we permit.

Or we might say: "don't mess with that lady... she has a bad disposition" I wonder, is a disposition something we possess? Like a cold or the flu? Is a bad disposition something that's inflicted upon a person... outside of her control? Or do we have a choice about our disposition?

The Apostle Paul seems to think that we do have a choice. **2 Corinthians 10:5**, Paul says "**we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.**" Christian, your heart belongs to God! And a heart that belongs to God needs to take a stand and not let the junk of selfishness (self centeredness), or envy and anger pile up in your life. Listen... capturing thoughts is serious stuff!

You remember the conversation Jesus and Peter had after Jesus had prophesied about his death, burial and resurrection? This is where Peter comes up to Jesus and declares that he couldn't bear the thought of such a thing happening to him. So he tells Jesus to stop talking this way. And Jesus says to Peter "**Get behind me Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.**" **Matt. 16:22-23**

Do you see how intent Jesus is? Here's a thought... a cross-less life would be nice. And Jesus is tempted to entertain this thought. But what do we see him do? He says, "Get away from me!" As if to say, "you're not allowed to enter my mind."

What if we did this?

What if you did?

What if you took every thought captive?

What if you decided to not let any junk enter your mind?

What if you took the counsel of Solomon? **Prov. 4:23** "**Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.**"

You find yourself driving down the road and you remember your co-worker or that neighbor or that family member who really did you wrong. You remember how they were so critical of you. You begin to think... you know... I didn't deserve to be treated this way! Who is she... who is he to criticize me. You know, you shouldn't throw stones at glass houses when you happen to live in

one. After all, look at this guy... he's as dumb as a bag of rocks! What does she know anyway? Why, I remember when... blah, blah, blah...

Can you relate?

Now what?

Here's where we make a choice. I can ignore what Paul says love does not do... "Keep a record of wrongs." And find myself picking through the garbage looking to collect junk! Old, nasty, smelly junk! We know how the stink of junk somehow stays on the junk collector.

Or you can do something different. You can do what Paul said he and his companions were doing... "Take captive every thought [and] make it obedient to Christ." (Which included the Christians in Corinth).

I mean quote verses if you have to!

Eph. 4:29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. 32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Rom. 12:9-10 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.

Rom. 12:12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

Rom. 12:14-15 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. [c] Do not be conceited.

We all know that you don't have to travel far before someone starts throwing their junk at you. It happens in families, at work and yes, even in places like this. Just because someone is throwing their junk around doesn't mean you need to start collecting junk in your own mind and heart.

You have a vote in how to respond. You're not a victim of your thoughts. You can decide right now to either prevent bad thoughts or to permit them.

Change the thoughts of a person and change the person. And if today's thoughts are tomorrow's actions, what happens to the person who decides to fill his/her mind and heart with God's love? Will this make a difference how you feel about others?

Listen to Paul... He seems to think so. Once again Paul says in 1 Cor. 13:5, Love KEEPS no record of wrongs" This verb "KEEPS" (logizetai) Paul also uses in **Phil 4:8**- "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – **think (logizesqe)** about such things."

Keeping is to ponder. Keeping is to think through. It's not enough to just keep bad things out. We know this doesn't really work well. We've got to let good stuff in!

It's not enough to keep no record of wrongs. Rather than picking through the garbage and storing a bunch of junk, ponder the blessings of God and store up the sweet stuff!

Consider the sweet stuff:

- List God's mercies
- List the times God has forgiven you
 - Stand eye-to-eye and toe-to-toe with the crucified Jesus and pray: "Lord, if you can forgive me from hurting you, then I can forgive them for hurting me."

We know that we've hurt Jesus with our own lives.

- Have you ever been dishonest with his money? Then that's cheating!
- Has your love for flesh or fame ever turned you away from him? Then that's adultery!
- Have you ever spoken an angry word with the intent to hurt a person? Then that's assault!
- Have you ever been silent while he was mocked? Don't we call that treason?
- Have you ever gone to church to be seen rather than to see him? Hypocrite!
- Have you ever broken a promise you made to God? Guilty of deceit!

It seems to me that most of us, if not every one of us in this room are guilty of dishonesty, adultery, assault, treason, hypocrisy, and deceit.

It's true; you didn't deserve to be hurt by them. But neither did you deserve to be forgiven by him.

God has taken care of you. You still get to enjoy sunsets, and hear babies laugh and gurgle. You still get to witness the change of the seasons. You have no lashes on your back, no hooks in your nose and no shackles on your feet. It's obvious isn't it? God has kept no record of your wrongs.

I'm not the only one who knows this. King David knows this too.

Psa. 130:3 [NIV] "If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O LORD, who could stand?"

[NLT] LORD, if you kept a record of our sins, who, O LORD could ever survive?"

Hey Christian! Lover of God and follower of Jesus! You haven't been sprinkled with a little bit of forgiveness! You haven't received just enough of a spattering of grace! You have not been lightly covered in kindness! Oh no... you have been completely immersed in God's forgiveness, God's grace and God's kindness! Let the truth of God's love change you!

God's love is powerful!

And the woman in Samaria would agree. I bet she could make a pretty good list.

1. Discrimination (Samaritan)
2. Gender Bias- (female and condescended to by men)
3. A Divorcee (5x's and now shaking up)

This is not Samaria's finest. Here's a lady who's lived a lot of life and has a lot of junk!

It's amazing what a little love can do though. It's like my garden. The other day, my tomatoes were wilting... Just a little water easily and quickly straightened them up. A little love can change a life.

There's no doubt that Jesus' love made all the difference in this woman's life. It happened because she let Jesus enter in. She let Jesus love her. And because of this love, she becomes a proclaimer of Good News.

She didn't have to.

And you don't have to.

You can stick to being a junk collector.

But why would you when Jesus has great plans for you and your life!

I like what Bill Hybles (Pastor for the Willow Creek Community Church in Illinois) says he discovered about the church: "The mark of community – true biblical unity – is not the absence of conflict. It's the presence of a reconciling spirit."

You can't walk with Jesus while carrying a grudge. Lay it down. Put a reconciling spirit of forgiveness in its place. Let offended and offender embrace – and know they are on the same team now for the sake of defeating Satan's schemes.

Love keeps no record of wrongs. Love leads us to love one another. And the way we truly love one another is to live in the overflow of God's love.

Scot Poirier

Minister

Chelmsford Church of Christ

205 North St.

Chelmsford Ma.

978-256-8901