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What About Revenge?

Proverbs 24:28-29: (NASB) ²⁸*Do not be a witness against your neighbor without cause, And do not deceive with your lips. ²⁹Do not say, "Thus I shall do to him as he has done to me; I will render to the man according to his work."*



We all have at one time or another wanted revenge - the act of not only getting back at someone or something, but being sure that they were delivered that little extra dose of humiliation so they would know to not ever mess with us again. Yeah, revenge - so often looked at as sweet and so often sought after as a dramatic answer to our woes. But is it? Is revenge sweet or desirable or even good? Well, the Bible says "vengeance is mine saith the Lord!" If God wants vengeance, then why shouldn't we? Stay with us as we put revenge on the table to find out where or even if it should fit into our lives.

Our Only Question for Consideration:

Is "getting revenge" the same as "getting justice" and should we ever seek revenge?



Revenge Statistics, Lecture Excerpt by Professor Michael McCullough, author of Beyond Revenge: The Evolution of the Forgiveness Instinct, given at Emory School of Law

Per year in the U.S.: Over 3,300 homicides, 61% of all school shootings, a quarter of all arsons and bombings - all directly attributable to revenge!

WHAT CAN CAUSE THE DESIRE FOR REVENGE... ???



What can cause the need for justice to be served? The committing of any wrong as defined by Law. What is the difference between the two?

Revenge is about "ME" - Justice is about that which is right!

Revenge is determined by my emotions mixed with circumstances

- Justice is determined by events in conjunction with the Law!

Revenge is personally orchestrated and served

- Justice is orchestrated and served through legal channels!

...But what if justice really isn't being served??

A perspective for Christians: Romans 12:14-21: So, God gets our revenge for us? Does this mean we should be kind to everyone so that God can get them in the end?



To help us answer these questions, we are going to unfold three true stories regarding revenge, looking at them step by step. The first two are about two men faced with an overwhelming desire to carry out revenge, and the third is about God carrying out His vengeance.

Chapter One: "The Loss."

))) The Loss/Story 1 - Kill-Dozer Story, Lecture Excerpt by Professor Michael McCullough, author of Beyond Revenge: The Evolution of the Forgiveness Instinct, given at Emory School of Law

- An active, kind, and engaged type of person loses an expensive legal property battle with his neighbor, which contributes to the demise of his business.

))) The Loss/Story 2 - The Man Who Forgave, Lecture Excerpt by Professor Michael McCullough, author of Beyond Revenge: The Evolution of the Forgiveness Instinct, given at Emory School of Law

- A "regular guy" suffers the tragic loss of his daughter in the Oklahoma City bombing.

We can readily see how the seeds for the desire for revenge would be sown in both of these stories.

The Loss/Story 3 - God's loss He experienced when mankind sinned. "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

Let's review the "loss" that God incurred: Genesis 3:6-12: From God's perspective, this portion of the story we call "**The Loss**" has been repeated over and over again throughout mankind's history. What has God always wanted that would have prevented the loss? Obedience!!!

1 Samuel 15:21-23: Saul created a bunch of excuses for keeping the best. To obey is better than sacrifice. God always wants our obedience.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE: WHERE THERE IS NO OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S LAWS, THERE IS ALWAYS LOSS.

Chapter Two: "The Initial Response."

))) The Initial Response/Story 1 - Kill-Dozer Story, Lecture Excerpt by Professor Michael McCullough, author of Beyond Revenge: The Evolution of the Forgiveness Instinct, given at Emory School of Law

- Response: As a result, this happy-go-lucky and social man became withdrawn and secretive. People saw him less frequently.

))) The Initial Response/Story 2 - The Man Who Forgave, Lecture Excerpt by Professor Michael McCullough, author of Beyond Revenge: The Evolution of the Forgiveness Instinct, given at Emory School of Law

- Response: As a result of his overwhelming grief, he became an alcoholic.

The Initial Response/Story 3 - God's initial response to His loss. The pronouncements are serious because it was a serious loss. God did not withdraw. Genesis 3:13-19: This is a prophecy of Jesus!

GUIDING PRINCIPLE: WITH GOD, WHERE THERE IS LOSS, THERE IS ALWAYS PUNISHMENT AS A CONSEQUENCE - YET NOT WITHOUT HOPE!



If we sow the seeds of revenge, what will we reap?
Galatians 6:7: Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.



Joseph could have taken revenge on his brethren instead.

Genesis 50:19,20: And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me: but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.



Back to King Saul for a moment: 1 Samuel 15:21-23: The loss that God experienced with King Saul had the penalty of Saul losing his standing as King. God dealt with these issues by using a just approach. God was angry, but his anger wasn't uncontrolled, vitriolic rage. It is anger that His law of obedience was discarded. **The anger was directed towards the nation of Israel:** Amos 3:1-2: A good father disciplines. Hebrews 12:5-8

Chapter Three: "The Plan."

))) The Plan/Story 1 - Kill-Dozer Story, Lecture Excerpt by Professor Michael McCullough, author of Beyond Revenge: The Evolution of the Forgiveness Instinct, given at Emory School of Law

- What he had been doing with his free time was building what became known as the "Kill-Dozer" out of a 52 ton tractor - complete with guns, cameras and a "plow" built for destruction.

))) The Plan/Story 2 - The Man Who Forgave, Lecture Excerpt by Professor Michael McCullough, author of Beyond Revenge: The Evolution of the Forgiveness Instinct, given at Emory School of Law

- This man chose to refocus himself away from his grief and his suicidal desire for revenge and arranged to meet the father of Timothy McVeigh.

The Plan/Story 3 - God's response to His loss includes hope.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE: BECAUSE GOD IMPLANTED HOPE WITHIN THE PUNISHMENT, THAT MEANS THERE IS A PLAN - A JUST PLAN TO REDEEM.



If we are going to be alive in Christ, we can't waste our life, emotions, and efforts trying to go backwards. Revenge is living in the past.
Matthew 8:2: Follow me and let the dead bury their dead.

God's vengeance: Nahum 1:2-3: This gives us a sense of wrathful God, but slow to anger. He will avenge His enemies - all those who do not obey. It is based in justice.

God's Vengeance is not without a merciful plan: Genesis 22:15-18

God's chosen example of the deliverer of all: Deuteronomy 18:15

God's plan is based on justice: Jeremiah 31:28-30

Chapter Four: "Executing the Plan."

))) Executing the Plan/Story 1 - Kill-Dozer Story, Lecture Excerpt by Professor Michael McCullough, author of Beyond Revenge: The Evolution of the Forgiveness Instinct, given at Emory School of Law

- The mission was to destroy millions of dollars of property - nine buildings - including the homes associated with those people who stood against his position.

))) Executing the Plan/Story 2 - The Man Who Forgave, Lecture Excerpt by Professor Michael McCullough, author of Beyond Revenge: The Evolution of the Forgiveness Instinct, given at Emory School of Law

- The meeting with Mr. McVeigh, which required a long drive in a rented car, yielded an emotional meeting.

The Plan/Story 3 - God's plan required a just payment for the sin. Revenge isn't based on justice, it is based on emotions. God works based on justice. His vengeance is not revenge.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE: EXECUTING THIS PLAN WOULD REQUIRE A JUST PAYMENT FOR THE SIN OF ADAM.

How God arranged for the just payment for sin: 1 Timothy 2:3-6: Mercy is shown here. This payment was being made in the context of God's vengeance: John 12:46-48: God is not revengeful. The payment was a JUST payment - a life for a life! Romans 5:15-19: Justice must be satisfied, which is why Jesus had to die. God's vengeance is based on justice and tempered with mercy so that all men can be saved.



Chapter Five: "The Result."

The Result/Story 1 - Kill-Dozer Story, Lecture Excerpt by Professor Michael McCullough, author of Beyond Revenge: The Evolution of the Forgiveness Instinct, given at Emory School of Law

- *Success? Millions of dollars of damage and the taking of his own life. Where is the value of the revenge?*

The Result/Story 2 - The Man Who Forgave, Lecture Excerpt by Professor Michael McCullough, author of Beyond Revenge: The Evolution of the Forgiveness Instinct, given at Emory School of Law

- *Success? A deep bond was formed; a lasting friendship began and healing ensued.*
- *"A simple trivial interaction of two fathers who were grieving was sufficient to completely change Bud Welch's heart."*

The Result/Story 3 - God's vengeance is not a reaction full of rage like we as imperfect humans react. His vengeance is based on justice with mercy.

John 5:28-29: Mercy AND vengeance! Note it is called the "Day of Judgment" - not the "Day of Revenge!"

Isaiah 61:1-4: This was prophetically talking about Jesus. (We know that because later Jesus quotes these Scriptures and explains that he was the fulfillment.) He releases the prisoners and binds up the broken hearted. Scripturally, God's vengeance is not eternal fire. It is justice being meted out to those who have done wrong. It produces "beauty for ashes." The end result is the rebuilding of the world.

God's vengeance is part of His formula for breaking through man's stone cold hearts and replacing them with a heart of flesh. The end result of this plan is to, through God's mercy AND his vengeance, establish a society on this Earth in which God's will and law will rule and all will live in harmony.

We want to rise above the human propensity to sow the seeds of the desire for revenge and to do something that is hurtful. Revenge takes things into our own hands, feeding our own emotions and causing hurts. Our revenge is established in emotion, implemented with hatred, carried out with vitriol and brings an end result of destruction and hurt. God's vengeance is established in Justice, implemented with Wisdom, carried out with Power and brings an end result of His Love for all mankind by the establishment of His Kingdom on this earth!

...So what about revenge?

For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions,

Think about it...!