

## Coffee with Phil - Episode 22 – Forgiveness Doesn't Come Easy

### Introduction

Well, hi, and welcome to the podcast, my name is Phil Strong and I'm glad to be with you today. Coffee with Phil is what we're doing, and today I'm actually, to be honest, enjoying a cup of tea, some afternoons you just gotta have a cup of tea, and that's what I'm doing, and wherever you are, I'm just hoping that you're enjoying a cup of tea, or a coffee, and let's get into today's session.

Today's session I've called 'forgiveness doesn't come easy'. Want to speak about the issue with forgiveness, or should I say the issue with unforgiveness, the difficulty with forgiveness, and I want to talk about the problems that we experience, and by we, I mean me, and you can choose how you apply this. But what other problems with holding on to unforgiveness? This is serious topic and one that I want to spend time with, so let's get into the session 'forgiveness doesn't come easy'.

Well, let's have a look at the Bible. It's always a good place to start, and I wanna refer you to a passage of Scripture from Matthew, Chapter 24, and Jesus is speaking to his friends, and he's speaking about the end of times. He's speaking about the difficulties that we will all face as time stretches on, and in fact squeezes as we get closer to the end of our time. I want you see this, he says, look Matthew Chapter 24 and let's just start from verse 10. Jesus says this, he says, and then many will be offended. Will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many, and because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

What I want you to understand that as time is challenging for us as the world becomes more difficult for us to live in. As we get close to the end of our age, it's gonna get tough, it's gonna get difficult, and Jesus says, look, people gonna get offended, but I want you to see the downward slide here because this is the warning for us this is the why would I want to listen to this episode, and why would I want to try and journey through this? This really challenged me when I started to notice unforgiveness in my life and so this is really why I'm on this journey.

Look, many will be offended. We can't avoid offence. We'll cover that in a second. But look, the second thing is, look, you get offended, then we'll betray one another, and we'll hate one another. So to me this looks like a downward slide. You have an issue, you get offended. You get offended, you start betraying people. You start betraying people, then you end up hating one another, and then look at it then actually ends with at the end of verse 12 it says and because lawlessness will abound. The love of many will grow cold. This means we become cold hearted. This means we become unaffected by what happens around us, we are hard and rigid and really when our hearts are hard, then God finds it difficult to work through us.

This has become especially challenging for me. The season of life in the last I'm going to say four to five years has been particularly challenging with going through circumstances with people close to me and not carrying long-term unforgiveness, that's been my challenge. I found it incredibly difficult. I've noticed that as I hold on to a grudge or unforgiveness that it has a flow on effect in my life, that I do become bitter, that I do become hard hearted towards other people. And so look, I just wanna share some thoughts on this, and at the end of the day you get to choose what you do in your life.

## Impossible to avoid

But let's just look at the beginning here. I'd say to you this, this is really, really difficult to avoid. In fact, I would say it's impossible to avoid. If you're going to do life with other people. If you're going to walk in a place of connection, then that is what creates closeness, and closeness, when you become close to someone you, you get to choose how far you lower the fence, or if you want to open the gate to them, in respect I mean, how vulnerable do you want to be this person to this person?

Now, if you think about perhaps some of your workmates that you know really well, you might choose to open yourself up a little bit more and choose to be a bit more vulnerable to those close friends at work. But you can probably think of people at work where you might think to yourself, look, I don't really trust them, or I don't know well enough. Or perhaps they've got a tendency to talk more than listen, and so I'm not going to open myself up to them, and therefore I'm not going to become vulnerable.

Now we each get to choose that. But if you're someone that says, I'm not opening up the gate to anybody. I'm not letting anybody in. Then you're gonna be very lonely. You're not gonna have any depth of connection with any person, and like that just makes for a grumpy hermit. So I wouldn't advise that attitude.

But here's the risk it's impossible. If you're going to live with people. If you're gonna open up your lives to be vulnerable to people, then you increase the risk of getting hurt, and look if you take a spouse relationship, husband, wife, engaged to be wed, kind of relationship then you don't really have a choice, you have to get close, you have to be vulnerable, and you have to accept the risk of being hurt. This is the person you're going to spend the rest of your life with, and just recently I had to apologise to Kathy. I said, look, I'm not upset at you, but you're the only person close to me right now, and you're just getting the brunt of what's going on now. She could have chosen to take offence at that, well you're yelling at me and it's not my fault.

But what I was trying to explain to her, is look, it's not your fault and I'm really sorry because I was somewhat emotional about what was happening. But the point is, living close to someone means there's a risk of getting hurt. The question is, how do we deal with that risk? How do we deal with that risk of being hurt? Because incidents will happen. It's impossible to avoid incidents where we get hurt. So we have to accept that we're going to get hurt in relationship, and then we have to deal with the consequences of that.

And then you might go, oh, well, what's even the point of working with people like this, and, or living with people like this, if I'm just going to get hurt? Well, look, the ability to deal with this is what opens up the way for new relationship levels, possibly even with those that are part of the problem. So I would say to you, don't take the attitude of cutting everyone off. Take the attitude of how do I become a person that can live? In a place of forgiveness, especially when forgiveness doesn't come easy.

I had a lot of a moment with the Bible recently when I was looking into this and just trying to deal with it in my own journey, and King David is someone that I often turn to. He's got a really interesting story, from Shepherd to King. He was a lover, he was a fighter, he was a worshipper, he was also someone that

betrayed others. He was someone that hid, when he should have been fighting, he was someone that God said, this is a man after my own heart. So, he's a guy that I really aspire to in some ways.

And I found in Psalm 55, David pouring out his heart, before God, give ear to my prayers. Don't hide yourself from my supplications, attend to me and hear me I'm restless in my complaint and I moan noisily, he says, because the voice of my enemy brings trouble upon me. But if you keep reading Psalm 55, it gets a little interesting because he says in verse 12, it's not an enemy who reproaches me, or then I could bear it. Nor is it one who hates me, who has exalted himself against me, because then I could hide from him. But it was you, a man. My equal, my companion, and my acquaintance, we took sweet counsel together, and we walked to the House of God and the throng.

He's saying that, look, the one that hurt me the most is that one that was close to me. And I've got to say, that's been my experience, without getting into the details. The people that I've invested into most deeply and personally have been the ones that have created the most hurt in my life. The ones that have scorned me, accused me, lied to me, lied about me, and in fact caused harm to my family. This is the risk. When the pain is this deep and it's someone so close to you. There is such a huge potential and inevitability, really, that you are going to be hurt and therefore offended. But offence is what leads to betrayal and hate and being cold hearted.

## **A helpful resource**

So what we have to do, what I what I'm trying to do, is I'm saying, it doesn't matter who hurts me. It doesn't matter how much it hurts me. What I need to do is make sure that my heart is not permanently damaged as a result of it. And one of the resources that's really helped me the most, if I segue across to the next section is a helpful resource that I discovered. It's a book. It's a programme. We'll put the link in the show notes, so make sure you read the show notes and get the links. There's also references in the transcription.

But a book by John Bevere called the bait of Satan. Is a very, very helpful resource and it was certainly for me because. Here's the thing. Look, people come. People go. People hurt you. People are fun. People provide you the greatest joy, and they provide you the greatest challenge. We just gotta get over it. There are people in our lives and we've got to live with them. It's impossible that no offences would come to us.

This is a quote from Luke, Chapter 17, verse one. Jesus says it's impossible for you, to his disciples, he said, it's impossible for you that no offences should come. Offence is a word that we've translated into English as offence, but in fact there's a Greek word, I don't wanna get into the language, and I'll probably pronounce wrong anyway, but essentially that word offence there comes from a word that means trap. It's the bait that leads you or the trigger that leads you into a trap where you become a captive to your enemy.

And so here's the point. Unforgiveness that causes offence in you is the bait that Satan uses to trap you into bondage where he gets to damage you. And that's the whole point of this programme, and it was really interesting. Because look, I don't want you to be hurt by people. I don't want you to live in unforgiveness. I don't want you to live offended and hateful and cold heart. But the devil does. The

enemy of your soul would be very happy to see you bitter and twisted and lonely and disconnected because you're carrying unforgiveness.

And so the bait, the bait that he puts out there is the opportunity to be offended. So, here's the thing that I learned from John Bevere, is if there's a situation that you're struggling with, particularly in regards to forgiving someone. First and foremost, you need to recognise that it's bait the enemy is trying to use to trap you, and the trapping will lead to your captivity or bondage as I call it, and quite simply that just means you're bound up in the in the trap where the enemy gets to hurt you.

## **Strongholds**

And this is, I suppose what I got caught up in, I had numerous situations where people close to me trashed me, burned me, left me, accused me, fought me and hurt my family. That caused a pain that led to unforgiveness. And the unforgiveness led to me being trapped, and the result of me being trapped was that I chose to build walls around me. I chose to put up walls where I wouldn't let people in. I chose to put up walls where I wouldn't let people see me. I chose to put up walls where I wouldn't let people understand me or be part of my journey because I was, quite frankly, deceived into thinking that everyone was going to end up hurting me.

These walls become isolation, and when we put ourselves into isolation, it's a deeper form of bondage. I want to read to you a quote that John Bevere uses in his course, and again, we'll put a link to this in the show notes because the programme, the book is available, you can buy it on Amazon Kindle, wherever good books are sold.

But I what I would say is there's an online programme that he's got for free and his online app or website called Messenger X. Again, check the notes for the reference. But he quotes a Bible teacher called David Wilkerson, who's an author, a pastor and a very powerful minister. And this guy speaks about a stronghold. Now listen to this. A stronghold is an accusation planted firmly in your mind. Satan establishes strongholds in God's people by implanting in their minds, lies, falsehoods and misconception.

So here's the thing. I get hurt, I get upset, I hold on to unforgiveness, therefore I become offended, that offended-ness of me, being offended becomes a bait or a trigger that the devil uses to trap me. Now when he's trapped me, he then implants in my mind lies, falsehoods, and misconceptions. I start to believe things that are not true according to God's perspective.

Therefore, listen to this. The devil may try to convince you that you have the right to hold on to bitterness because you've been wronged. He'll try to destroy your marriage by persuading you, you can't endure this relationship until your spouse changes. Or in my case, he would lie to me and say, you can't let anyone close to you because they will just hurt you,, and your family and they will upset you, and they will cause accusations to come against you. The devil will lie to me again and again and say, you must protect yourself by going in to isolation, hide from people and do not be vulnerable.

This was my challenge guys. This is what I fell into. A trap where I was thinking that it was safe for me only if I protected myself from the very people that God is calling me to be walking with in safety. So I

hope that resource helps you. I'm going to point you to it. But I want you to understand that the trap that we fall into only ends up hurting ourselves.

## **The Bible Says**

I want to share some scriptures with you. These verses, I have found really helpful, Colossians Chapter 3. Paul in verse 12 onwards, he's saying, hey, come on, you're chosen by God who is holy. Put on your tender mercy, kindness and humility, bearing with one another, and forgiving one another. If anyone has a complaint against another, look, Christ forgave you, so you must also forgive others.

Ohh that's challenging. I don't care who you are. You wake up in the morning, even if you think you're perfect. You read that and you're. Like, no, I don't know if I can do that. I don't know if I can do that. The Prophet Jeremiah, he wrote in his writings to us in Jeremiah 17, verse 10. You think you might get away with this, you might be able to hide, and the Lord says no, no, I the Lord search the heart, attest the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

You see us holding on to unforgiveness is essentially us choosing to take the hard road, allowing the devil to be causing pain to us, and God says look you got a choice, you can let go of it, or you can hold on to it and suffer the consequences.

Psalm 139, verse 23, search me O God, know my heart, try me, and know my anxieties, see if there is any wicked ways in me and lead me in the way everlasting.

## **Only with Jesus**

Hey look, I want to tell this right now, I don't know who you are, I don't know what you're the faith situation is, whether you're even someone that believes in Jesus, but I would say this to you. The Bible was telling us that God will search our heart, and we will bear the fruit of our lives. If you're bound up in bitterness, you know that you're lonely. You know that you keep people out. You know that you're not enjoying the life that others are enjoying, and the reason is because you're holding on to unforgiveness, it's caused offence and it's made you cold hearted.

The way to shift out of that is to say, God come and search my heart, show me where I am anxious. Show me where I am unforgiven and help me to come to someone in love and bring forgiveness to that situation.

Now, that's easy for me to say because I'm sitting on this side of the microphone and I can't see you. You can't see the hurt that I'm carrying and you can't, I can't even see the people that have caused me that hurt. But I had to get to a point where I read this and went, Oh, well, I can't do that. Oh, there's no way I can do that. I'm not going to be able to do that, and you know, I had this conversation with Jesus about it, and I don't remember where I was. I don't know how it was going, but I tend to just walk and talk, and I said to Jesus, I said, I just don't have the strength to do this, I can't, like it hurts, I'm still hurt and I don't want to be hurt again. I don't want to see my family go through this again, and I don't want them to watch me go through it quite frankly.

And Jesus, it's like a good idea, but too hard. And Jesus just said this to me, I know friend. I know you can't do it. Will you allow me to help you? And that took the pressure off. That means I didn't have to complete it on my own. I didn't have to be strong enough. I didn't have to be a big enough person. I didn't even need to understand the how. I just need to take my broken heart, my hurt feelings and my confused mind and I say, Jesus, I give these to you, and even right now, as I'm speaking this, I'm doing that again. I'm just trying myself and my mind offering over this box of junk, broken heart, disappointments, fragmented friendships, and betrayal. I'm putting them in a box and I'm handing them over to Jesus, and I'm saying, Jesus, would you take these away? Would you take these away so they no longer have a negative impact in my life? Would you take them away so the devil can't use them as a trap? I choose to use your strength, to rely on your strength, and offer forgiveness to these people that have hurt me.

And some days I don't feel like doing that. So I say, Jesus, I don't feel like doing this, this sucks, like I don't have a feeling like I want to do this, but I'd like to do it because I know I'm being obedient to you. I'm doing it because you say that it will help me to do this and that I will find healing only when I trust you. So, as I close this, I'd just like to say that there's only one way that we can find forgiveness that doesn't come easy, and that is to rely on Jesus. We gotta trust that Jesus is working in us to enable it to happen, and we have to trust Jesus that he will bear the fruit of our submission to him, and ultimately that we will see good things come as we trust in Jesus. One of the things I always like to do with the podcast is to share things with you and I've got to be honest. Me being vulnerable in this way is really opening myself up to the risk of more hurt, but if I can't choose to live differently then I'm not going to get a better outcome.

## **What about you?**

So there's me being vulnerable. What about you? What are you prepared to do? What are you gonna do about this? I'm sharing my journey with you, but I'm also inviting you into a journey as well that you would say. Hey, I've got unforgiveness. God search my heart. You know, my anxieties reveal them to me. Show me the people that I have not yet forgiven.

And this is a private journey. I'm not asking you at this point to run around and point fingers, throw stones, or even plead your case with people. There's a time for that, but today, here, now I'm inviting you to a place where you trust Jesus to help you to find forgiveness, because forgiveness doesn't come easy. But if you hold on to unforgiveness, you will become offended, bitter, hateful and cold hearted. And I don't want that for me, and I don't want it for you either.

Look if this has been challenging for you, then sorry, but not really sorry, and excited, because that means that Jesus is leading you towards something cool. If you're really, really struggling, reach out. Send the message through the appropriate channels that will get to me, and maybe there's a way that we can help because, yeah, ultimately you don't have to do this on your own.

So, as I close, I feel a little bit like this is a bit of a heavy one, but sometimes we need that, don't we? The good news, friends, is that the healing that comes through forgiveness is full of joy, it's full of hope, and it's full of new days, and what I mean by that is when you finally choose to let go of the hatred,, and the bitterness and the offence, and walk into forgiveness, it's very liberating. Forgiveness brings you into a

place of freedom where you're no longer under the bondage of captivity that you got trapped into, and as a result of that you can live life in a sense of lightness and freedom that no longer weighs you down, and imagine what life would be like for you. I'm speaking specifically to those who are struggling.

Imagine what life would be like if you were free, and easy ,and hopeful, and looking forward to building new friendships, and deep relationships with other people. That's what's on the other side. When you walk into a place of forgiveness and I hope you do.

I've enjoyed being with you today and I look forward to sharing with you again soon, in another episode of Coffee with Phil. Make sure you subscribe on your podcast channel and I look forward to spending time with you again real soon. Catch you, on the other side. Bye.