



Change

Part 4 – You Don't Have to Live with Regret

Travis Brawner

We're in the middle of a series called *Change*. Today, we're talking about the part of change where you don't have to live with regret. We've all likely experienced regret at some time in our lives. There are different kinds of regret. Some of us have regrets from years past. Some of us have some regret from maybe not so many years past, but definitely from our past. And then there are times when we seem to have moments of instant regret, where we instantly regret what just took place.

Let me give you an example of what I'm talking about. This guy here [picture of man falling forward from a bicycle]. He is certainly experiencing a moment of instant regret about whatever led to this. We don't have the whole scene here, so I don't know exactly what took place before. I'm guessing if we had a video into this scene, we may have heard him say something like, "Hey, watch this" or "Hold my beverage." He could have been drinking Dr. Pepper. I'm living proof you can make regretful decisions after only drinking Dr. Pepper. The funny thing is that he looks like he's about my age, which puts him in the generation that's been saying, "We grew up riding our bikes without helmets and we survived just fine..." until now.

We have different kinds of regrets. Some regrets may be of a hairstyle from your past. Remember this one [picture of female hairstyle from 80s]? You know who doesn't regret this hairstyle is the makers of Aqua Net hairspray. They are all retired now because of this one hairstyle.

Other hairstyles from the past [picture of Billy Ray Cyrus with a mullet]. There it is. Thank you, Billy Ray Cyrus. They say the mullet is making a comeback, so let me just encourage you... Don't listen to them. It was a bad idea then and it's a bad idea now.

We may have some regrets of fashion from the past. In case you didn't know how to tight roll your jeans, here's an easy 1,2,3 instructions about how to do that. I don't mention this one because I regret having done it. I mention it because you may regret that you missed out on it... because it was awesome!

There are some fashions from those days that are regrettable. Remember these? Hammer pants! Someone said it. I didn't wear hammer pants. The funny thing is some of you wore hammer pants while making fun of your parents for having worn bell bottoms. I gotta say I'm going to side with bell bottoms on this one. Not that bell bottoms were good; they were just less bad.

Maybe you have tattoo you regret. Or maybe you have some tattoos you don't regret and you're proud of. Either way, you would regret if you had a tattoo artist that didn't have spell check, otherwise you might end up with a "NO REGERTS" tattoo. That's just too ironic.

We also have regrets in our food decisions sometimes. Exhibit A: chili cheese nachos are always regrettable. Always. Every time. No one ever, after finishing eating these, said, "That was the right choice. I feel satisfied and refreshed." Chili cheese nachos is always a regret. We call it chili and cheese, but let's be honest. That ain't cheese. I've seen a lot of cheese and that ain't it. That's some yellow, liquid goo that has the consistency of mucus. You may say, "I'll never eat chili cheese nachos again." Your welcome. Scripture actually addresses chili cheese nachos in Proverbs 14: 12. It says, ***There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.***

We have other kinds of regret. We have certain phrases that seem to always end in regret. "Hey, let me try that pogo stick." Bad idea. "Honey, I think I can remodel our bathroom myself." How many of you have had to call a professional to bail you out halfway through a project? Am I the only one in the world? No one last service did either. How about this one: "You know, I don't think that brush pile is too big for me to burn right now." The hands are already going up. How many of you have had to call the fire department to bail you out? Okay, we're getting honest.

The problem with our regret is as many things as there are from our past that we can laugh about and simply change our wardrobe or let our hair grow out; as many things that are funny like that, there are as many or more things that just aren't laughable because the hurt just runs too deep because of things that we regret from the past. Maybe there is a business endeavor that you regret going into because you didn't really understand the risk and so you wish you hadn't.

Or maybe there's that time or those times of drunkenness that you regret. You see, there's a reason that scripture says do not get drunk with wine. Intoxication lowers our inhibition and we tend to participate in regretful behaviors. Maybe that's how you got that "no regrets" tattoo. Not because you were drunk, but your tattoo artist was. Maybe you regret having become sexually involved with a person that wasn't your spouse, either in a pre-marital situation or after marriage. Maybe you regret estranging a loved one, a friend, or family member who's no longer around for you to be reconciled with.

There are plenty of those kinds of regrets, but I think one that we all experience at some point is regret of our words – things that we say that we wish we could take back, but you can't. There is an analogy that may be a little bit overused, but I think it's perfect. Our words are like toothpaste. Once it's out of the tube, you can't take it back. So, we have so many regrets of our words.

The thing is... Young people, hear me on this. Our words used to just be our spoken words. Now we have social media and things that we post, things that we say, pictures, things that are out there so, we've got to understand, now even more than ever, that the things that we say, the things we put online are there forever. So many things from our past that can haunt us and things that hurt, regrets that we have.

That's the first thing we are going to talk about with regrets. There are two sides of regret that we are going to talk about. We going to talk about our past regrets, but then we are also going to talk about the future and avoiding potential future regrets. To kind of pull this together, we're going to look at a passage that we talked about a few weeks ago. Ted introduced this passage in the onset of this series about change.

In John 8, the woman caught in adultery... Some would argue we was framed into adultery so that the scribes and Pharisees could bring her to Jesus. They said to Jesus, ***“Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. 5 In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?”***

Jesus said, ***“Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.”*** After which they drop their stones and walk away, leaving the woman standing there alone.

Jesus said to her, ***“Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”***

11 *“No one, sir,” she said.*

Then Jesus says these words that I think are some of the most profound words he ever spoke. ***“neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.”*** In that, he addresses both sides of regret. “Neither do I condemn you,” and then he turns the page to “go and from now on sin no more.”

First, we are going to talk about past regret. When we talk about past regret, we're generally talking behaviors that are regrettable – something we did or something we said that hurt someone. We either hurt our self or we hurt someone else, but people are involved. The thing about people in our human condition, in our sinful condition is we are bent toward justice. When someone does something to us that hurts us, we want justice served. Likewise, when we do something to someone else, they want justice served towards us. That's our bent. Eventually, we may come around to forgiveness and grace, but we are bent towards justice.

That's people, but here's the thing. God, for those who have received Jesus, is bent towards grace. God is waiting to pour out his grace on you. God desires for you to receive his grace through his Son Jesus. And for those who have received Jesus, God is bent towards grace; his justice has been served, we have been justified in Christ. So that's important for us to remember, but it's also why sin is so messy.

That's because there are two relationships involved here. When we hurt someone, we have this earthly, sinful nature, people relationship, and we have the relationship with God. In our sin, in our hurt towards others, we receive grace from God, but there will be earthly consequences of our sin that remain. Let me give you an example. If you drive drunk and you are in an accident that you cause and someone is hurt or killed, in that sin, if you have received Christ, you are forgiven. The blood of Jesus on the cross has covered it. But there will be earthly consequences that remain with the friends and the family and members of the community. That's why it's so messy.

How about the extramarital affair example? If someone has an extramarital affair and they are in Christ, they receive grace through Christ and forgiveness, but there will be the horrible earthly consequences in

their relationships. They may even be reconciled with their wife, but that will always remain in the consequences on earth. Sin becomes so messy in these two relationships. And as we understand that our past regret is based on these earthly relationships, where we need to go is to rest in the grace of God. For those that are in Christ have been saved, and we rest in that grace.

Let's look at 2 Corinthians 5. **17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!** So, what we understand is that when we are created, when we are conceived... God created you in his image after his likeness and knitted you together in your mother's womb, he created you. You are born in to the world, born into a sinful nature because of the fall of mankind and our sin nature. That's our initial creation. When we come to Christ and we receive Christ, we confess with our mouth Jesus is Lord, believe in our hearts God raised him from the dead, and we become a new creation, completely new. You see that the old has passed and the new has come.

We understand the word of Jesus on the cross, his dying word was *Tetelestai*, which is Greek for "it is finished." The thing we need to understand about this tense of the word *tetelestai* in the Greek is that it's present tense and future tense. In other words, it's finished now and it – this justification for sin – will continue to be finished. It's ongoing. It never ends.

Psalms 103 says, **12 as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.** The thing you should know about east and west you already know. They are directions; they're not a place. Two places are required to come in proximity to one another, but east and west are directions, and they are always opposite of one another no matter where you are. That is the lens that God sees us through when we receive grace through his Son Jesus. That is how he views us. That is the grace that we receive regardless of the earthly consequences that remain. God sees us as a new creation, that it is finished, and it will continue to be finished.

He removes our transgressions from us as far as the east is from the west. And that is the grace that we need to rest in as we wrestle with past decisions that have led to regret. That can be hard. Some of you may struggle with that constantly and that's something you really have trouble with. If so, I want to encourage you to read a book by Dr. Charles Stanley called *In the Grip of Grace*. Charles Stanley wrote it. It's a book from the 90s. I don't think he had a mullet though. Dr. Stanley is not a mullet kind of guy. *In the Grip of Grace* is a great book for those who struggle with grace. And that is where we're going to leave past regret this morning, and we're going to turn the page. The thing about past regret is there is nothing we can do about it except for come into the grace we receive from God.

So, we leave past regret behind and we turn the page to "go and from now on sin no more." We look to the future to plan to behave in such a way to avoid future regret. With that, we're going to start with 1 Corinthians 13. **11 When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.** We know how children tend to act. If they get in trouble or there is some kind of reprimand, they fight back. If they are corrected in something, they maybe talk back to you. What does that do? That gets them in more trouble. So, you see it starts them down this slippery slope because now they are more frustrated. Now maybe a sibling gets involved or a friend and it frustrates them even more. Then they may lash out physically and even hurt themselves or

someone else. So, you see this slippery slope they go down and these regrettable behaviors, one that leads to another.

We have a friend, Jamie Pettigrew, that she and her husband, Ray, have four kids. I love what Jamie said that she does. When one of her children ends up in this kind of slippery slope of regrettable behaviors, she stops them the best that she can, and she asks the question, **“What is the next right choice?”**

There is always a next right choice. Regardless of where you are in a string of behaviors, there is always a next right choice. And that applies to us as adults. You see, there is a next right choice for you if you are in a regrettable behavior. Maybe the next right choice is to confess your sin to the Lord, confess your sin before man, the person you have sinned against. Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed. So maybe that’s the next right step for you.

Maybe the next right step is getting off of that social medial platform that you know is not good for your soul, that brings in emotions and brings out behaviors in you that are not healthy. Maybe the next right choice for you is leaving a relationship with someone. Scripture says, “Leave the presence of a fool, for there you do not find words of knowledge.” So, there may be a person or a group of people that we’re around that when we are around them, we tend to be in regretful behaviors. So, maybe that’s the next right step for you. There is always a next right step. We should be moving on from our old self, giving up childish ways.

As we grow older, we get older, we get age. As we come into age, we have experiences. And as we have experiences, it should lead to knowledge and that knowledge should lead to wisdom, which should lead to discernment and behavior modification. There is this process that should take place as we put childish ways behind us and grow up in our faith.

Proverbs 16 says, **31 *Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life.*** I see some royalty around here. We have some of you with a full crown of glory. My crown is starting to work its way in, little by little. That’s the way it works, isn’t it? You don’t just wake up with gray hair. It happens slowly, over time. Those with a full head of gray hair would tell you, “I’ve earned every single one of those gray hairs from my age and experience and knowledge.” That happens over time. A little gray here, a little gray hair there. With each experience, you gain knowledge which should develop into wisdom and discernment and behavior modification.

Unfortunately, Proverbs is a generalization; it’s not an absolute. So, we’ve seen the full gray hair crown of glory person that has not grown out of their childish ways, but generalization holds true. You see, those with a full head of gray hair and their aged years tend to be quick to hear and slow to speak. They tend to know how to calculate risk. They tend to be less concerned about the future because, frankly, the world is pretty predictable. They know how things go. They know which home improvement projects not to take on themselves. Some people would say, “I wish I could go back.” They wish they could go back 20 years, 30 years, or however many years. They say that youth is wasted on the young. Frankly, not me. I don’t want to make the same mistakes I was making 20 years ago, saying the same things. I want to take advantage of my age, my experience, my knowledge, wisdom, discernment so that I can modify my behaviors as I grow out of childlikeness.

If you haven't been here long, you should know something about us. We like to talk about dog vomit. Let me explain. Proverbs 26 says, **11 Like a dog that returns to his vomit is a fool who repeats his folly.** Generally speaking, when a dog vomits, it's because he's gotten into something he shouldn't. You may have a dog that has gotten into a bag of Doritos in your pantry and ate the whole bag and maybe even ate the bag. Our dog has gotten into the cat litter box and eaten out of a cat litter box. Has anyone else's dog done that? I want you to think about that the next time you let your dog lick you in the face. Or maybe worst of all, your dog got into your chili cheese nachos. What happens is a dog that gets into something that he shouldn't, vomits. And then a while later, for some reason, the dog will come back and eat that vomit.

So, what we're reading here in Proverbs is when we repeat the same mistakes over and over that's what it's like. And that, frankly, is just gross. **Like a dog that returns to his vomit is a fool who repeats his folly.** We should be growing out of childlike ways.

I want to look at Romans 6, starting in Verse 1. What we read is Paul saying, **1 What shall we say then?** Those words should prompt us that there is something before that that's pretty important. The something before that is Paul talking about how sin entered the world through one man and righteousness and grace also entered the world through one man – Jesus. And that as sin increases, the grace increases. And that the sin will never surpass the level of grace that exists from God.

Then he continues, **Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?** That's the water submersion baptism that we participate in. The symbolism of that is that you are baptized into Christ death.

4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that... Those are important words – *in order that...* **just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.** In order that we too might walk in newness of life. What we understand here is that when we die with Christ in our sin, it is in order that we too might walk in newness of life. So, you see, the death in Christ that we die is not so that we just kill the sin. It is so that we too might walk in newness of life. It frees us to pursue holiness.

My friend, Chad Hampsch, and I were in a discussion several months ago and we were talking about this issue of sexual sin. He said, "The thing we have to remember is that the goal of avoiding sexual sin is not purity, but rather holiness." I think that applies to everything in our lives. The goal of avoiding sin in anything is not to just maintain this white veil of purity around us, but rather to free us to pursue holiness, to pursue Christ likeness. In the pursuit of holiness, it's going to require us to seek God's will. We have to understand what it is that God desires for our lives. That leads us to the next point.

The best way to avoid regret tomorrow is to seek God's will today. He gives us his will in scripture. In addition to getting our crown of glory and our experiences, more importantly, he gives us his will in the scriptures. The scriptures talk about many different things that he desires for us. He talks about many different flavors of chili cheese nachos, those things that seem right to a man, but their end is a way to death. He talks about relationship nachos. He tells us about career nachos, about financial nachos. He

talks about marriage nachos, parenting nachos, all different kinds of nachos, as we seek his will in scripture, understanding the ways that he desires for us.

As we seek wisdom, we see the will of God and we gain wisdom. We need to understand there are two sides of wisdom. I believe there are two sides of wisdom. There's knowing the right thing to do, but then there is doing it. One of my favorite petitionary prayers that I bring to the Lord often is this: **Lord, give me wisdom know the right thing to do and give me courage to do it.** Holiness requires both. Knowing the right thing to do and doing it.

Let's look at the first part. Lord, give me wisdom to know the right thing to do. In James 1, we read in God's word that if anyone is lacking wisdom, let him ask and God gives it to them generously. God will give it to us generously when we ask for wisdom.

You may have a picky eater kid at home that never wants to eat anything healthy. Imagine them saying, "Hey, can I have some more of those vegetables?" "Yeah, yeah, you can. Here is the whole serving bowl of the broccoli and I'm going to go to the refrigerator and we've got some cucumbers and tomatoes. I'm going to make a spinach salad. And here's some corn and carrots. That's all we have so I'm going to run to the grocery store. I'll be right back. I'm going to go buy the whole produce section and bring it back because, yes, yes, I will give you things that are good for you." That is the Lord when we request wisdom. He has armloads of wisdom he's just waiting to dish out for those that are asking, he gives generously.

The second side of that is give me the courage to do it. We read in Philippians 4: 13 that I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. So, we understand that it is through Christ that we receive strength to do the hard things because the right thing to do is often hard. Then God tell us the same thing he told Paul in 2 Corinthians 12: 9: **My grace is sufficient for you...** It's interesting... Remember that? The grace we receive regarding of old regrets. **...my power is made perfect in weakness.** God's power is made perfect when you come to him in your weakness, seeking wisdom, and then courage. Knowing the right thing to do and then subsequently doing it.

Some change is simple. You just need to delete the app, or you need to leave the presence of a fool. Some change is a little more difficult and more complicated. It may even be things that we default to. "Well, it's just how I am." It seems engrained in our being and it's hard to leave behind. We may be an enabler of someone and we say, "I'm not really confrontational, so I'm just not going to address it." Or maybe you are really harsh in your words towards people, and you say, "I'm just a straight shooter; I just like to tell people like it is. And whether it hurts them or not, it doesn't matter, they need to know." Or you may be really explosive and angry, and you can say, "I just have a short fuse; it's just the way I am. It's just the way God made me." Well let me tell you, no it ain't. It ain't the way you are and it ain't the way God made you because scripture tells us that those behaviors are wrong. Anything scripture tells us is wrong, God did not intend that for you.

God tells us in scripture that there are things that we need to change and that we can change. Not only does God, through scripture, tell us that we can change, science tells us that we can change. Let's talk about that for a moment. Some of you say, "Well, wait a minute... He said the S word in church. We

don't believe in science, we believe in God." Some people on the outside may say, "I don't believe in God, I believe in science." Let's clear something up though. There are philosophies within science that we don't believe, which, by the way, haven't been fully proven by the methodology of science. What I mean is inside science there are some philosophies that say that nothing exists except for God's created, natural universe, that the natural universe is all that there is and there is no God that created it. Then there is also the methodology of science, the method that we use to discover and explore and experiment. God gave us science to help us understand some of the mysteries of his creation, his created, natural universe. He gave us science to do that.

Other things he spelled out very clearly in scripture. That's why we still say scripture is our number one source of truth.

So, God gave us science, so we can use science because we believe the methodology of science that we can discover certain things about ourselves. For instance, that we can change, that we evolve. There's another word that makes you uncomfortable. We don't believe in evolution as Darwin said that is the origin of our species, that we evolved from lifeless matter through a purposeless process. But, understand that the word evolve means change. We understand that we do change, but we don't believe in Darwin's theory. We don't believe that's where we came from, but we do believe in descent with modification. We believe in something called natural selection. I can prove to you that natural selection exists. Remember this guy [the guy on the bicycle]?

We can look to science. We don't lean on it; we lean on scripture. We can look to science though to understand how we change. I want to talk to you about something called neuroplasticity. It comes from *neuro*, which means nerve, and *plasticity*, which comes from plastic, which in the Greek is *plasticos*, which means to shape or mold. So, neuroplasticity means the shaping and molding of your nervous system, literally of your brain. Our brain develops circuits over time, especially when we're kids, but even into our adulthood, we can lay down new circuits. The circuitry of our brain and the way that certain inputs into our senses – smell, sight, touch, taste, hearing – affect us emotionally and the way that it generates behaviors. So, these pathways are created over time.

Let me give you an example of what I'm talking about. If every time, when you were young and you went to Grandma's house, she fed you Nutter Butter Cookies, now when you eat a Nutter Butter Cookies, you remember Grandma. You can even maybe smell the fragrance of her overdone perfume. Those pathways have been laid down.

How about the empty nest mom? You hear the back door of your house slam shut and it suddenly floods you with emotions because it takes you back to when it was your children in and out of that door. Those pathways have been laid down.

For me, every time I hear a certain song, I just can't resist. I've got to tight roll my jeans. Thankfully for me, neuroplasticity causes our behaviors to change over time. It causes the way certain inputs affect our emotions and the way that we allow that to affect our behaviors, and they change over time. It's based on what we allow into our nervous system that affects these pathways.

Therefore, we understand that it's extremely important that we look at Philippians 4 - ***8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.*** You see, science says not only that you can change, but you will change. You will change based on the thing that we allow into our lives, the inputs that we allow into our lives, and the way that we allow them to linger, the way that we decide to process them, and the subsequent behaviors that we allow in our lives. So, you see, the methodology of science that God gave us to discover about ourselves says you are going to change. The question becomes how are you going to change?

We remember also that scripture tells us, more importantly, that we can change. We remember that anyone that is in Christ is a new creation. The old has passed away and the new has come. We don't have to dwell on past regrets. Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you..." As a matter of fact, he removed your sins as far from you as the east is from the west, one direction from the other. We remember that our sinful nature was buried with Christ and it killed the sin. We receive grace and we can rest in that grace regardless of the earthly consequences that remain from all the relationships around us, and regardless of that, grace wins. We've been buried with Christ so that we too might walk in newness of life. We were raised with Christ to walk in newness of life. We are free to pursue holiness and in that pursuit of holiness, we seek his will, and in seeking his will, we naturally avoid future regret. So, we remember this morning that you can change and that you don't have to live with regret.

Let's stand and pray together this morning as we close our time. Father, we love you and we are grateful for all you've given us and done for us. Lord, we are in awe of the grace that you pour out on us. We're thankful that for those who have received you, we can rest in your grace, and that justification has been served.

Father, help us to understand and to deal with consequences of past sin, but help us, more importantly, to turn the page to receive your Son Jesus and the grace we receive through him so that we too might walk in newness of life. Help us to understand the new creation that we are. Help us to move on from our childlike ways and take advantage of our wisdom.

Father, this morning, we pray that you give us wisdom to know the right thing to do and the courage to do it. We love you, we thank you, we give you praise, and everyone agreed and said... Amen.