

BETTER THAN OKAY

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May 3, 2026

JOHN 10:10

SUNDAY REFRESHER

Jesus doesn't offer a slightly improved version of life - He offers abundance. Not survival, not numb existence, not "just getting through the week." Abundant life. And yet... if we're honest, most people don't live there. Not because the Shepherd is absent, but because thieves are active. Not always obvious, not always loud - but subtle, corrosive, working beneath the surface. Bitterness is one of those thieves. Quiet. Justified. Even understandable. But deadly. It doesn't just sit in the heart - it spreads, like roots under soil, unseen but invasive, turning wounds into identity and pain into poison.

And here's the tension - bitterness often begins with something real. A wound that mattered. An injustice that never got resolved. A moment where the scales never balanced. You waited for closure, for acknowledgment, for justice... and it never came. So you carried it. Protected it. Rehearsed it. But what started as pain slowly became a prison. Scripture doesn't minimize the wound - it exposes the root. And then, almost offensively, it offers the only way out: forgiveness. Not because it's easy. Not because it's fair. But because it's the only thing strong enough to pull bitterness out at the root instead of just trimming the fruit.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

- *What did God say to you through this passage and teaching?*
- *Did God reveal anything new to you?*
- *How is this relevant in your journey to make disciples who Love God and Love people?*

QUESTIONS

- *Why do you think bitterness feels justified, maybe even protective?*
- *What practically does bitterness produce?*
- *Where have you experienced a wound that never received the closure or justice you expected? How might that have shaped you over time?*
- *What makes forgiveness so difficult to offer, and how does remembering what Christ has done for you change that tension?*

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

John 10:10 | Hebrews 12:14-15 | Deuteronomy 29:18 | Ephesians 4:31-32

CONCLUSION

Let's not rush past this - because this is where it gets real. Who is it for you? Not theoretically. Not generally. Specifically. Whose name comes to mind the moment we start talking about wounds, injustice, and unresolved pain? That's the place. That's the root. And if we're honest, many of us have been carrying that "briefcase" for years - evidence stacked neatly, arguments rehearsed, verdict ready... but no courtroom ever arrives. So the case just stays open, and the weight just stays with us.

But the gospel steps in and says something both freeing and confrontational: you don't have to keep prosecuting the case. Not because it didn't matter - but because it's already been paid for. The Shepherd didn't just point the way to forgiveness - He absorbed the cost of it. Bitterness says, "They owe me." Jesus says, "I already paid." And somewhere in that tension... is your freedom. Not when you feel it. Not when they deserve it. But when you choose it.

Knowing that life transformation happens best through intentional, meaningful relationships, don't let this week's sermon remain as mere information. In the next few days, look for ways to teach, challenge, encourage and/or pray about what you're discovering!

