



How things fit together in the Kingdom

Holding Grudges

Holding grudges is something I've seen many, many times among Christians. One wonders, therefore, if it's OK to carry a grudge against someone. If long-standing Christians are doing it, it must be OK, mustn't it? If church leaders¹ are doing it, then it must definitely be OK. But is it?

To get the answer to whether it's righteous to hold grudges, we could see what the Bible has to say about it. There we find that there's really only two verses that teach us about our attitude towards grudges – one in the OT and one in the NT.¹ Here's the OT one:

Leviticus 19:18 (NKJV) – *You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.*

The Hebrew word translated 'grudge' is *nāṭar* (נָטַר) which means 'to guard'; figuratively, 'to cherish (anger)'; 'bear a grudge'; 'keep(-er)'; and 'reserve'.² It has a wide range of meanings, not just grudges.

In this verse it only refers to holding a grudge against another Israelite. From our reading elsewhere in the OT we can quite easily see that it was OK for Israelites to hold grudges against people of other ethnic groups. This was quite apparent in regard to the Roman occupation in the period around the 1st century AD. It was also OK at that time for them to hate their enemies, according to the teaching of the rabbis.ⁱⁱ

We are not Israelites, so we can't take this command and apply it to ourselves. We aren't in that covenant so it doesn't apply. It's important to remember that that's the principle we must stick to in understanding how we live and operate in the Kingdom under the New Covenant (NC).

However, note that the verse includes the statement for them to love their neighbour as themselves. Can we reject that part also, because it was given under the Old Covenant (OC)?ⁱⁱⁱ The answer is "No", because it was reiterated and given to us by Jesus.^{iv}

Jesus never repeated the first part of the Levitical command, about not holding grudges. Does that mean it's OK to hold grudges? The answer is "No". The reason being that grudges are a negative, unloving activity, which means that loving others excludes holding grudges against them. Paul explained this,^v which is how we know what our attitude should be. Love is the plumb-line we should use to evaluate any attitude towards a person, or anything we're thinking or going to say – i.e. compare it with love.³ For the benefit of legalistic people, that's why we no longer need to keep any of the OC laws,^{vi} including the 10 Commandments^{vii, viii}.

The NT teaching on grudges is this:

James 5:9 (New Matthew Bible) – *Do not grudge against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the judge stands before the door.*

The Greek word translated 'grudge' is *stenazō* (στενάζω) which means 'a sigh' or 'to groan'.⁴ It's also

1 – It was the reason the church hierarchy tried for 20 or 30 years to prevent my father going into the Uniting Church ministry.

READ: His autobiography "The Courage to Be" is here – [LINK](#) [FREE PDF]

2 – Strong's definition www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Lexicon.show/ID/H5201/natar.htm

3 – "Love Must be Our Plumb Line" canberraforerunners.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Love-must-be-our-plumb-line2.png

4 – Thayer's definition www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Lexicon.show/ID/G4727/stenazo.htm

used to mean ‘murmur’, ‘pray inaudibly with grief’ or ‘grudge’.⁵

Depending on which translation you read, your Bible may not instruct you that it’s wrong to hold a grudge because the word isn’t in that version of the NT. Only 7 of the translations in Bible Gateway⁶ use ‘grudge’ in the verse above.⁷ The remaining 55 use either ‘complain’ or ‘grumble’.

This creates a problem for us because our English understanding of ‘grudge’, ‘complain’ and ‘grumble’ describe very different actions. Reading one Bible translation which only says ‘grumble’ or ‘complain’ would allow a person to hold a grudge because a grudge to us is different to grumbling and complaining.

So, where should we stand on grudges according to the **KINGDOM PERSPECTIVE**?

Grudges are founded in unforgiveness and hate, both of which don’t belong in the Kingdom. We already know that we must forgive and not hold unforgiveness against any one.^{ix} We also know that hate is from our base nature,^x not our renewed nature.^{xi} That should automatically disqualify any idea that grudges are OK for us.

Finally, as always, we should find out from Father what his mind is on anything we want to know. After all, not everything we need to know or assess is in scripture. In regards to grudges, here’s what he’s told us:

*“It is time to **let go of grudges and forgive those who have offended you**. Unforgiveness leaves a stain on your soul. You need to remove this stain so that you can be healed. Love covers a multitude of sins, but bitterness and hatred create an open wound.”⁸*

There you have it. For us, grudges are **not** OK.

When you recognise that you’re holding a grudge, the first thing to do is confess that you are doing it. Confess it to Father or to Jesus and tell them you repent (turn away from it to their way) and that you have decided not to hold grudges any more. Then ask them to forgive you, and follow that by forgiving yourself. The next step is to declare forgiveness to that person by speaking it from your heart into the spirit realm with your voice. Next, exonerate the person by stating that you now hold nothing against them.

If the grudge has impacted your relationship with the person, you’ll need to go and ‘make up’ with them. Confess to them that you were wrong in doing it and ask for their forgiveness. If they forgive you, well and good. Now repair the relationship. If they don’t forgive you, the ‘balls in their court’. Leave it with them and keep your heart pure towards them.

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References are on the next page

5 – Strong’s definition www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Lexicon.show/ID/G4727/stenazo.htm

6 – www.biblegateway.com

7 – KJV, AKJV, KJ21, BRG, DRA, GNV & NMB

8 – Marsha Burns “Small Straws in the Soft Wind” (September 16, 2021) www.ft111.com/straws2021.htm

REFERENCES

- i – Leviticus 19:18 (NKJV); James 5:9 (New Matthew Bible)
- ii – Matthew 5:43
- iii – See Matthew 19:18-19
- iv – Matthew 22:39
- v – Romans 13:9
- vi – James 2:8
- vii – Exodus 20:1-17
- viii – Romans 13:10; Galatians 5:14
- ix – Matthew 6:14-15; Luke 17:3-4
- x – Titus 3:3 (NJKV)
- xi – 1 John 3:15