**I Choose Grace!**

The greatest gift of all – the grace of God. Hebrew 12:15 says, “See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.” When we miss grace a bitter root begins to grow. In Hebrew culture a poisonous plant was called a ‘bitter’ plant. In fact, in nature our senses of taste and smell have evolved to alert us to the bitter taste of poisons and the offensive smell of spoiled foods. Our senses are our natural defense mechanisms. They apply a brake that helps us avoid ingesting foods that are harmful.

Our choices of which foods to consume are motivated by more than avoiding the bad, for survival our choices are also motivated by seeking the good. However, not everyone is capable of sensing toxins in food, and not everyone is enthusiastic about consuming foods that are healthy.  In fact, one could argue that given the global prevalence of obesity and its co-morbidities, modern society has evolved, to our detriment, to lack an aversion to harmful foods. In fact, we are drawn to them.

Likewise, perhaps a significant percentage of modern society has also lost the ability to detect bitterness within the spirit.  With our fast-paced lifestyles we make choices in haste and out of convenience, which allows the consumption of toxins harmful to the mind and body to become commonplace. We repeatedly miss our opportunities to choose grace, and we enable bitter roots to flourish until we are surrounded by toxic weeds. This toxic environments we create not only impact us they also impact our loved ones. Bitterness is contagious.

Thankfully, the COVID-19 crisis forced my lifestyle to slow down and allowed me to realize that bitterness had become the lens through which I perceived my life. The crisis gave me an opportunity to see that the choices I had made were creating the toxic environment that overwhelmed me.  I was also able to see and receive God’s grace. He reminded me that grace is a gift we not only receive ourselves, but we can share it with others as well.

Galatians 5: 22-23 tells us the kind of fruit the Holy Spirit wants us to consume in our hearts: self-control, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and faithfulness. If we keep practicing bitterness, the weeds begin to grow and choke the fruits the Holy Spirit wants to produce in our lives. Consuming these fruits is the grace of God that flows through us, and from us, to others. Grace, like bitterness, is contagious. So with each day I choose to apply the brake to avoid ingesting bitterness within my spirit. Instead, I consume the fruits of the Holy Spirit, and thereby find myself (and my loved ones) surrounded by the grace of God. Thanks be to God.

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