

Christian Healthy Lifestyle Episode:

David (00:00.322)

There's a healthy lifestyle practice that can reduce depression and anxiety, lower blood pressure, reduce your risk of heart attack and stroke, enhance sleep quality, boost immune function, and more. Now every Christian I know is aware of this practice, but I've found very few people execute it well. Let's talk about it.

Welcome to the Christian Healthy Lifestyle Podcast. I'm your host, David Sandstrom, and I help Christians opt out of the medical matrix, cut through the noise, and embrace a natural health lifestyle the way God intended. For more, visit chlpodcast.com. I want to make sure everyone's aware of the new membership club that I'm starting. My goal is to have a group of like-minded believers that want to declare their independence from the medical paradigm and embrace a natural health lifestyle

that's consistent with our God-given divine design. Now, it's not just going to be a membership community. Inside the community, I want to help you go deeper in your natural health journey. I'm planning on having monthly live Q &As where you can ask me anything you want about health and wellness. I'm going to bring some guests on in those lives as well. I'm also planning on having a private podcast and a private newsletter that will only be available inside the community.

and you'll have access to a growing library of online courses that I'm creating. Now, I'm also going to have a resources page where you can take advantage of member-only discounts on some of my favorite products like supplements and healthy food delivered to your door. The community hasn't launched yet, so I encourage everyone to get on the wait list. Now, it's going to be a paid membership, but founding members will get the lowest price that will ever be offered for the membership, and that window won't be open for long. So go to my website.

chlpodcast.com forward slash membership, sign up today and get on the wait list. There's no obligation to join, but if you're on the wait list, you'll stay up to date on the upcoming launch. I look forward to hearing from you. Today's topic is about forgiveness. Now, forgiveness for most people is a pretty uncomfortable topic because if we acknowledge that we have a

need to forgive, then we're also acknowledging that we've been wronged and we've been hurt in some way and nobody likes revisiting their hurt.

David (02:18.658)

But the way out of that pain is genuine heartfelt forgiveness. This is one of those truths that can really set you free if we apply it. So this is going to be a powerful episode. Now, if you're listening to the audio version, go ahead and continue listening if you're at the gym or whatever. But when you get home tonight, I encourage you to check out the video version. I've got a lot of graphics on this episode and I believe those graphics are going to enhance the learning concepts.

Go to my website chlpodcast.com forward slash 174. You can watch it there or go to YouTube. The easiest way to find my YouTube channel is youtube.com at Christian Healthy Lifestyle. That way you'll go right to it. Now in the last episode, we talked about pursuing strong, connected, loving relationships, but that's not easy. That's easier said than done. I like the way one of my favorite authors, John Eldridge puts it. He says,

Living in community will be like a pack of porcupines on a cold night. We need to draw near one another for the warmth, but when we do, we poke each other with our spines. So if we're going to be living in community, we will hurt people and we will be hurt. Therefore, we all need to practice the art of forgiveness. But no one on their own wants to do it. That's because forgiveness is a supernatural act and there is a spiritual warfare aspect to this.

2 Corinthians 11:3 says, but I'm afraid just as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray. So the enemy doesn't want freedom for us. God wants us to be set free from anger, resentment and bitterness that comes along with withholding forgiveness. And the enemy says, no, they don't deserve it. Don't give it to them. Hold on to that anger. That advice, that way of thinking is harmful to our health.

You see, withholding forgiveness can lead to anger, resentment, and bitterness, and we don't call those toxic emotions for nothing. They are harmful. That's why God takes forgiveness very seriously. Forgiveness is a big one. It's in the Lord's prayer. And forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors. Matthew 6:12. And then we see in Matthew 18 verses 21 and 22. Then Peter came and said to him, Lord,

David (04:44.728)

How often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times? Seven is the number of perfection in the Bible and Peter was aware of that. Jesus said to him, I do not say to you up to seven times, but up to 70 times seven. So in other words, there's no end to it. You don't count the number times you forgive. We always have a forgiving heart because that's what's best for us. And then right after that passage,

Jesus proceeds to unload the parable of the unmerciful servant on the rest of the disciples with Peter. And that's a pretty tough teaching and that didn't go well for the unmerciful servant at all. So God has some strong language in the Bible about forgiveness because he cares about us. But God's word is clear. Forgiveness is a command. Ephesians 4:32, be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving each other just as God in Christ has also forgiven you.

Now here's an important point. Forgiveness is not for the perpetrator. It's not for the person that hurt us. It's for us. Now I want to repeat that. We don't offer forgiveness for the sake of the person that hurt us. We do it for our own sake. We do it because that's what's best for us. You see, I often say this on the show. God loves us enough that when he tells us to do something, it's for our benefit. And if he tells us to avoid something,

It's for our protection. There's never a time when those two truths don't apply. And so it applies here. God commands us to forgive. Why? I mean, we don't have to forgive, but if we don't, it's going to be harmful to our health and harmful to our mental emotional state. So God commands us to forgive. Now command is a strong word, but it's my contention that we'll never regret doing things God's way. Let me give you an illustration.

The average Burger King franchise takes in about \$1.5 million a year in revenue. They're open seven days a week. The average McDonald's takes in about \$2.5 million a year and again, open seven days a week. Now Chick-fil-A on the other hand is closed on Sundays. So they only have six days a week to do business, but they want to give their employees the opportunity to have a Sabbath rest day.

David (07:08.812)

Now, the Harvard MBAs would say, that's a poor business decision. Look at all the revenue you're missing out on because you're closed one seventh of the week. Well, doing things God's way is working out for them. The average Chick-fil-A franchise produces four and a half million a year. That's three times as much as the Burger King and almost twice as much as McDonald's franchises. So they do things God's way and so far it's working out pretty good for them.

Withholding forgiveness or embracing unforgiveness is a serious health blocking factor. Unforgiveness leads to resentment, anger and bitterness and those emotions will chronically activate our stress response and raise our stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline. And that can lead to all kinds of health issues. It can produce inflammation in the body, systemic inflammation throughout the body, high blood pressure, sleep disorders, digestive issues,

compromised immune mood disturbances depression and anxiety in fact Chronic cortisol drip can cause just about any health ailment under the Sun because it weakens our defenses So how do we practice forgiveness? Well, I've got some slides that I've put together That I use during our marriage presentations that my wife and I lead these marriage groups And I want to share a few of those slides with you here because I think they really apply There's a concept that we teach in those classes

It's called the emotional cup. Each of us has an emotional capacity and that capacity is limited. So we can think of that emotional capacity like a cup, like a red party cup, let's say that you would drink a beverage at a party. And inside our emotional cup, there's all kinds of hurtful emotions that are building up, these negative emotions. We have hurt, sadness, disappointment, anger and resentment.

fear, anxiety, insecurity, guilt, condemnation, all those things when they fill up, they leave very little room in our cup for the positive emotions like love, joy, and peace. Our cup is filled up with junk and it's pushing out the positive emotions like love, joy, and peace. We have less capacity to experience them. And when our cup is filled up with junk, it produces bad outcomes. So when our emotional cup is filled up with the negative emotions and the junk and the garbage,

David (09:36.728)

we have very little capacity to experience positive emotions like love, joy and peace. Now, when we have a full cup, just like if you had a red party cup in your hand and you were in a crowded room and someone pushed you, something's gonna spill out of the top of that cup, right? Well, the same is true if we're walking around with a full emotional cup. There's stuff that spills out of the top of that cup when we get stressed. So here in this slide, we're talking about some of the physical effects.

I have on here sleep disturbances, appetite disturbances, headaches, stomach aches, digestive problems. But as we said earlier, if this is creating stress and we are experiencing a chronic activation of our stress response, we can create all kinds of health issues. Just about anything can be produced from the chronic activation of our fight or flight reflex. So what we want to do is avoid emotional constipation. We want to process these emotions.

and flush those emotions down the drain. Okay? So this is our approach. With a full cup, our capacity to experience love, joy, and peace is limited. So we want to drain the cup. So we're talking about in this episode about learning how to forgive. If we can learn how to forgive, we're going to drain some of that hurt, sadness, anger, resentment, bitterness, and make some more room in our cup.

So we'll have more space available for love, joy and peace. And when we do that, these symptoms that are coming out of the top of the cup when we're stressed, they just start to disappear all on their own. All the things that are coming out of the top of the cup, the stuff that we spend weeks or months or maybe even years in the counselor's office, those are symptoms. Those aren't the root cause. The root cause is a full cup. But the negative behaviors that we engage in because we're walking around with a full cup.

Those are symptoms. If we address the root cause by draining our emotional cup, the symptoms will go away on their own.

David (11:38.926)

So before we're ready to really jump into the forgiveness exercise, we have to understand what forgiveness is and what forgiveness isn't because there's a lot of misconceptions out there. And if we're believing some lies about forgiveness, we will be much less motivated to actually practice it.

So we've got to remember, I mentioned this earlier, forgiveness is a supernatural act. Love what Mark Twain says, forgiveness is the fragrance the Rose gives off.

to the heel that crushed it. I like this quote too. I don't know who wrote it, but it's really good. Forgiveness is like crossing monkey bars. In order to move forward, you need to let go of what's behind you. And that reminds me of the Bible passage, Philippians 3.13, forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead. Living in the past is not going to help us any. We need to address where we are and how are we going to move forward.

And what's the best way to do that? Here's another great quote that I love by Louis Smeeds, to forgive is to set the prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you. There's a spiritual warfare aspect to this, 2 Corinthians 11.3, but I'm afraid just as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray. Don't let your mind be led astray by believing lies. And this is a really good one by Malachi McCourt.

withholding forgiveness is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die. So what forgiveness isn't, let's talk about this. It isn't excusing the other person and saying what they did was okay. Right? This person committed a wrong. It was directed towards us and there could even be legal consequences to what someone's done to you. So we're not excusing the person. We're not letting them off the hook. No one ever gets away with their sin.

We are turning them over to God and we're letting God handle them. And we're allowing God to be concerned with the consequences to that person's sin. not the ones in charge here. We're not denying reality. We acknowledge that they did it. It was wrong. They did it to us and it mattered. Forgiveness is not letting the offenses recur. Someone might believe, well, if I forgive them, then that's going to give them permission to keep doing it to me. No.

David (14:04.266)

that behavior has to stop. Okay. So we hold people accountable, but that doesn't mean we can't forgive them. Forgiveness isn't dependent on others actions or attitudes. Right? Forgiveness is always unilateral. We can offer forgiveness to someone who's been deceased for 10 years. Right?

So someone might say or believe, well, I'll forgive them when they apologize or I'll forgive them when they do fill in the blank.

xyz, whatever it is. Our offering forgiveness should not be dependent upon anything they do. Again, they can be deceased and we can still offer forgiveness. It's not stuffing the herd. Okay? What they did to us was wrong. What they did was ugly, but we're not going to just sweep it under the carpet and pretend that it doesn't exist. We need to pull that carpet back and maybe shake it out a little bit and really get to the bottom of things. So it takes a little work here.

Forgiveness is not conditional. We shouldn't put any conditions on our forgiveness. It's always unilateral and it's for our own benefit. If we put conditions on the forgiveness and we say they have to do this or that, then we're still empowering the perpetrator. We want to take that power back. We want to claim our own agency and our own free will and empower an authority and do what's best for ourselves here. Forgiveness is not a feeling.

If we waited till we felt like forgiving, we'd probably never get around to it. Forgiveness is a decision of the will. Now it's tied to feelings because if we do this well, our emotions will improve. Remember, we're going to drain the emotional cup, right? We're going to get rid of some of that hurt. It will be able to remember the event with more grace. We won't have that familiar knot in our stomach when we think about the event. We'll be able to remember the event with more grace.

Which brings us to the next point and that is forgiving is not forgetting. We're human beings. We will remember what's been done to us. But if we forgive properly, we'll be able to remember those events with more grace and a lot less pain and hurt. Now, forgiveness is unilateral. We talked about that earlier. Luke 23, 34. Let me pull that out. Pull my phone out here. Luke 23, 34. But Jesus was saying, Father, forgive them.

David (16:29.934)

they do not know what they are doing. Those are his words spoken from the cross. Forgiveness is matter of stewardship. Colossians 3.13 says, bearing with one another and forgiving each other, whoever has to complain against anyone, just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

Forgiveness is refusing to extract restitution. Romans 12.19. Never take your own revenge, beloved.

But leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, Vengeance is mine. I will repay, says the Lord. Forgiveness is giving up our anger. Ephesians 4:31, let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Forgiveness is always extended to the undeserving. This is a big one. No one deserves forgiveness. It'd be easy to say,

Well, I'm not going to forgive them because they don't deserve it. Well, that's true. But forgiveness always goes to the undeserving because no one deserves forgiveness. Romans 5, 8. But God demonstrates his own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Forgiveness is a choice, not a feeling. Again, these are tied together. It's a choice of the will. We're exercising our agency in choosing to forgive.

And when we let go and we let God handle the consequences and we let God extract the restitution for that wrongdoing, we will experience less hurt, fewer painful emotions, and we'll have more room in our emotional cup for positive emotions. That's very health promoting. Forgiveness is sometimes sought prematurely. Now, if you don't want to forgive, that's okay. You might not be ready to.

Pray, seek counsel, ask God to empower you, ask God to give you the heart to forgive. Again, you're not doing it for their sake, you're doing it for your own sake. And the Holy Spirit can help guide you through that. So how do we do it? How do we forgive well? And how do we do it from the heart? Well, I would highly suggest going through the forgiveness exercise that I put together. But this podcast isn't the best format for doing that. It's best done with a close friend.

David (18:55.136)

or maybe even a godly counselor. Now I've got the forgiveness exercise in my book, *The Christian's Guide to Holistic Health*, and you can get a free chapter from my book on forgiveness. Go to my website, chlpodcast.com forward slash 174. If you go there, you can pick up a free download of that chapter from my book on forgiveness. And in that chapter, I have detailed instructions on how to go through this forgiveness exercise. We're not

going to go into it here. It's just really not the right format. Or you might want to just

Pick up a copy of the whole book. It's a 325 page book and it'll help you cut through the noise and walk you through embracing a more natural holistic health lifestyle from a biblical perspective. That's what my book is about. That's what this show is about. It's called The Christian's Guide to Holistic Health. It's available on Amazon in hardcover, paperback, Kindle, and Audible. Now here's one less thing I want to mention on this episode. Some of us need to learn how to forgive ourselves.

We've all made mistakes in the past, but that doesn't make us bad people. Doesn't mean our hearts are bad. We are not our sin and we need to separate ourselves from it, just as Jesus did when he was hanging from the cross. So most of us are familiar with Paul's struggle with his sin. The apostle Paul in Romans chapter seven, he talks about the struggle with his sin. But it's important to note in that chapter that as he's describing his struggle with his sin, he says things like,

The very thing that I hate, I find myself doing. But two times in that chapter, not just once, but twice, he separates himself from his sin. Look at verses 16 and 17, Romans chapter seven. But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the law, confessing that the law is good. So now no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. That's verses 16 and 17.

than if we go down in Romans seven, verse 20, but if I am doing the very thing I did not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin, which dwells in me. So Paul separates himself from his sin. He knows sin is not his identifying characteristic anymore, and it's not ours either as born again believers of Jesus Christ. This concept of separation is how Jesus was able to look down from the cross

David (21:20.206)

and forgive the people that drove the nails through his hands and feet and hung him on it. Right? Jesus was able to see the real people for who they are and not their sin. Jesus paid a steep price for our sins and he didn't come to this earth and die a humiliating, painful, bloody death on the cross for pond scum. In God's eyes, we all have great worth. Ephesians 2 10 says,

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." Some translations say we are his masterpieces. And when God makes something, he doesn't make junk. Some of us, maybe most of us, need to put an end to the self-loathing. We need to see ourselves as God sees us.

and offer ourselves compassion and forgiveness. Now, normally at this point in the show, I want to tell you about the next week's episode, but right now, I've been spending so much time working on the new online membership club that honestly at this moment, I don't know what next week's episode is going to be about, so it'll be a surprise. But what I do know is the membership club is going to be incredible. I encourage everyone to get on the wait list now. Make sure you're eligible to join as a founding member.

and lock in a substantially discounted rate for the monthly membership. Founding member pricing won't be available for much longer, so do yourself a favor and get on the wait list now. Go to my website, chlpodcast.com/membership. Sign up today. It won't cost you anything. You've got nothing to lose. That's all for this week. For more, go to chlpodcast.com. Thank you for listening. I appreciate you. Go out there and live abundantly. I'll talk with you next week. Be blessed.