

A FRESH START STRONGER THAN YOUR REGRETS

VIDEO ONE

The writer and essayist Katherine Mansfield once wrote: 'Make it a rule of life never to regret and never to look back. Regret is an appalling waste of energy.'

We get the sentiment, right? We all know the feeling of lying in bed with the memory of that thing we did wrong, that person we hurt, that responsibility that we neglected, circling round and round. Or we know the wincing pain of a regretful memory that interrupts our day. It feels so unproductive – it doesn't change the past, it doesn't help our present – regret feels like a waste of energy.

Yet though we would love to make it 'a rule of life' to have no regrets, it's not always that easy. Regret feels hard to shake. It sticks to us.

It's important to clarify what we're *not* thinking about today. The temptation for some of us is to feel guilt for things that we shouldn't, perhaps because of things that have happened *to us*. We feel regret where we haven't done anything wrong. That is not the kind of regret that we're thinking about today. If that's you, speak to someone about it – false guilt can be complex to navigate. But with the help of others, the Bible, and space to talk– we can start to untangle those feelings and find clarity.

The regret we're thinking about today is the more common kind - where we knew what we were doing, we knew it was wrong, and yet we did it anyway.

How do we deal with this kind of regret?

For many of us, the answer is to *suppress it*. Perhaps, like Katherine Mansfield, we think regret is a waste of energy, so let's ignore it. Don't look back. We distract ourselves, excuse ourselves, keep ourselves busy, and push regret down when it rises up.

Yet studies show that suppressing negative emotions is rarely a good idea – in fact it can be damaging physically and psychologically, with regrets only resurfacing years later.

Others of us do the opposite, we *hold onto regret*. Some of us, as a form of self-punishment, deliberately dredge up the memory, to remind ourselves how wrong we were. Others of us sit for hours in imaginary 'what ifs'. We might even use regret as a form of protection – if we hold onto our regret, it might prevent us from making the same mistake in the future.

And if we're Christians here today, many of us think it's good to hold onto regret. It's good to feel bad about the bad things we've done. That's what God would want. But holding onto regret so often leads to drawing us further into ourselves, away from others, and away from God.

We all live within the obvious but often difficult truth that we can't change the past. It's what makes regret so painful. And whether we're tempted to suppress or hold onto our regret – we long for the future to be better.

We long for a fresh start.