

The Battle with Bitterness

Hebrews 12:14-15

Ephesians 4:26-32

To live above, with saints we love
Will certainly be glory.
To live below, with saints we know—
Well, that's another story!

Illustration of the feud over the Fence

Bitterness results when forgiveness is NOT offered. **Hebrews 12:15** says, “*Be careful that none of you fails to respond to the grace which God gives, for if he does there can very easily spring up in him a bitter spirit which is not only bad in itself but can also poison the lives of many others.*”

(J.B. Phillips) Daily we are all given an opportunity to forgive someone for something. I think that most Christians follow the Biblical admonition of quickly providing forgiveness to any offender (**Ephesians 4:26**).

However, some people, including Christians, DO NOT let go of an offense and have NOT forgiven. When that happens the *button of self-destruction*, has been pushed! When you gain a “*bitter spirit*” it is not long before you become a source of offense to others and soon affect yourself. Self-destruction has started!

I) Characteristics of Bitterness

A. Symptoms that Occur

Where there's bitterness, there's discouragement. Because bitterness leads to paranoia. You start to develop a victim's mentality, that everyone's out to get you. You become negative, critical, and paranoid. You become judgmental of others

Malice, Depression, Negativity, Complaints, Fear, Critical Spirit, Inability to trust God and Others, fatigue, loss of sleep

B. Suffering that Overtakes

Bitterness has been medically linked to glandular problems, high blood pressure, cardiac disorders, ulcers, and even insanity.

One leading psychiatrist wrote, “90% of all people in insane asylums could be released immediately if they would learn how to forgive, or how to be forgiven.”

II) **Cause of Bitterness**

Determined by our Response to

A. Discipline - Cain

B. Disappointments - Naomi

C. Debts – Ahithophel

Our bitterness is not caused by the offence rather by our Response to It

Curse It – Rehearse It – Nurse It

If your BITTERNESS is the fault of the person who has offended you, then you wouldn't be BITTER anymore once they apologized. BUT, an APOLOGY won't get rid of the BITTERNESS.

BITTERNESS isn't based upon what somebody did to you ... it's the result of what you have done with that offense.

III) **Cure for Bitterness**

A. Forgiveness we Receive (we must be forgiven for our Bitterness)

Disperse It – Casting all your Care

Reverse It – Joseph and Job

B. Forgiveness we Reciprocate

Luke 17:3-4

3 Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.

4 And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.

2 Cor 12:9

9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

*THERE IS NO BETTER TEST OF A MAN'S INTEGRITY
THAN HIS BEHAVIOR WHEN HE IS WRONG. (ODB)*

As we practice the work of forgiveness we discover more and more that forgiveness and healing are one.

Agnes Sanford

Forgiveness is a funny thing-it warms the heart and cools the sting.

William Arthur Ward (1812-1882)

Forgiveness is not an occasional act, it is a permanent attitude.

Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968)

Small Group Questions

1. We know that bitterness always begins with anger caused by a hurt or perceived hurt, what does Ephesians 4:26 say about how we should deal with anger?
2. Anger comes at a high cost; it can do more harm to the vessel in which it is stored than to the vessel on which it is poured. Explain why this true?
3. Is it possible to have “sinless” anger? Explain.
4. Read Ephesians 4:27 and explain what happens when we hold on to anger. Discuss how the Devil takes advantage of this.
5. With the warning that is given in Ephesians 4:29 what is God saying could happen when we have unresolved anger?
6. Based on Proverbs 14:29 summarize what happens in an incident when someone is slow to being angry, and one that is quick to get angry.
7. According to Ephesians 4:31 bitterness is something that we must take action on purpose to remove out of our lives, why is this important to know? (just asking God to take it away is not good enough)
8. How did you feel when you heard that our bitterness is not the offenders fault but it is our own wrong response to an offence? Do you believe this? Did this change how you feel about dealing with the offence and bitterness?
9. Ephesians 4:32 gives us the key to dealing with bitterness and it is the only thing that works, what is it? Why is it so hard to do sometimes?
10. Are you tired of hurting and ready for God to bring healing to your life, if so are you ready to come to God first for forgiveness then are you ready to offer the same to the one who offended you?

Memory Verse

Mark 10:27

27 And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.

Please believe that the ability to forgive is possible for without forgiveness healing will never come!!!!!!