

***CONSIDERING THE PROBLEM OF BITTERNESS  
and RESENTMENT***

**Recognizing the Problem**

Everyone of us, at some time or another, feels that he has been wronged by another person. At that point we will either forgive or become bitter and resentful. Bitterness will steal our inner peace and even cause physical illness. It will destroy our fellowship with God and cause our closest human relationships to suffer.

Bitterness is often the overflow of resentments we have allowed to develop. Doubtless, bitterness can be the result of resentment. We should easily recognize a bitter and resentful spirit in ourselves.

**What we often do:**

1. We hold on to resentments;
2. then, we dwell on them until they to become as mountains in our minds;
3. we meditate upon what others have done to us;
4. and gradually produce a hateful, bitter spirit.

**God Warns Us All About Bitterness.**

1. The husband is especially exhorted to not allow bitterness toward his wife. (See Col. 3:19.) I think this takes place as the husband allows his heart to become hardened toward his wife and her needs. A man ought to easily recognize that he is allowing bitterness to *dwell* in his mind.
2. Another way we are warned about bitterness is God's admonition that we are to **put away bitterness**. It is number one in the list. (See Eph. 4:30-32 and Col. 3:8.)
3. Bitterness will produce a development of failure in the lives of many others around us. It is like a serious, dreaded plant that can destroy a farmer's

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crop. We can entertain bitterness until it becomes **a root of bitterness within us** which defiles many others. God gives us a tremendous warning in Heb. 12:15-16.

### What Are Elements of Bitterness?

We will look at some of the elements which are involved in the process as people become bitter.

1. *Bitterness involves judging and condemning.* The bitter person feels he has a right to judge. He may feel the seriousness of the hurt gives him the right to condemn. Rarely does such a person look at his own heart meditation, but rather at the hurts someone has caused. He sets himself up for a bitter spirit.
2. *Bitterness is a continuation and a deepening of anger.* A person may experience anger and get over it. He may forgive, get rid of the anger, and put it away before the sun goes down. (See Eph. 4:26, 27.) But the bitter person builds and builds the anger as he meditates on all that was done against him. Gradually he produces a hateful, and bitter spirit.
3. *Bitterness is like a growing plant that continues to grow and it will produce its own fruit.* The bitterness within may be hidden for a while, but the roots continue to grow. Such a bitter spirit brings forth fruit in the lives of other people. A bitter mother or father will produce bitterness in the child's life as well as in one another's heart.

### Why Do People Become Bitter?

There are a number of reasons. We will examine the most likely and probably the most frequent reasons.

1. *We are hurt and become bitter because of many unfulfilled expectations.*

Life is made up of many expectations! We entertain expectations in every area of life from the time we are children.

**We have expectations in:**

- a. *our marriage.* We come to the wedding day with certain preconceived expectations. A husband and wife will view marriage differently with varying expectations about what they feel their marriage should give them. We might even feel like saying, *"I am a grand canyon of needs, hope you fill all of them for that is why I am marrying you!!"*
- b. *our lot in life.* We expect life to bring certain things to us and if it doesn't we can easily become resentful and bitter.
- c. *our employment.* We expect certain things from our boss and those with whom we work. If these are not fulfilled we will soon entertain a critical and bitter spirit.
- d. *our friendships.* We naturally expect certain things from our friends. These are inner-conceived expectations that we hold on to. If our friend fails us we can become very resentful and even sabotage our friendship.

**Our expectations can become so out-of kilter,  
and so unreasonable.**

Yet we are not even aware of what mentally we are demanding of life and from others. I think unfulfilled expectations is the number one reason why people become bitter.

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We can become greatly obsessed with what we feel others ought to do for us and what life ought to bring us. We don't even see God at work or even consider His great unconditional love and grace which is at our disposal at all times.

2. *We become bitter as we try to balance guilt and blame.*

It seems to be a natural thing for us to try to balance our own guilt and blame with the other person's blame whom we feel is a problem to us. We maximize their failure in our mind.

Maybe we feel that we can straighten out the other person if we put on the pressure. So, we readily remind them of their guilt and continue blame-placing, thinking we can secure our ends.

3. *We become bitter in our attempt to get revenge.*

The actions and attitudes of our partner, our spouse, our children and those around us is designed of God to teach us and to help us to see ourselves. Too often we allow the failures of others to become the "*fan that fans the flames of our bitterness.*" We are already a bitter person on the inside and their actions only causes us to bring it to the surface of our lives.

### **Marriage is God's Divine Curriculum!**

Marriage is a divine curriculum that extends through-out our lives. There are many books in this curriculum. We should not expect perfection from ourselves or from others as we experience the Divine curriculum for home life.

4. *We become bitter because we take up offenses.*

As we pick up the offense, meditate on it, and build the thoughts and feelings that surround it, we quickly build a bitter spirit. This can become such a part of our lives that it takes place daily, in potentially many different ways and for many different reasons.

### **What Does Bitterness Produce?**

Bitterness will produce many serious things in our lives and in the lives of others around us.

1. *Bitterness will bring us to **depression**.* Often a bitter person becomes very depressed. The very impact of a bitter spirit will naturally bring about deep depression in the life of the person who has allowed such an attitude

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in his life. I have met many people who wonder why they are so depressed and when helped to examine their thoughts (or self-talk practices) and attitudes they came to realize they are also very resentful and bitter about many things.

2. *Bitterness will cause **insensitivity**.* (See Col. 3:19.)

The bitter person also soon loses his sensitivity to others, especially those toward whom he entertains the bitter feelings. Such a person becomes very insensitive to all the significant people in his life -- wife, teens, friends, workers around him, etc.

Bitter people become very indifferent to the hurts, needs, feelings, desires, etc., of others.

3. *Bitterness will also produce **ingratitude** and a very unthankful spirit.*

It won't make any difference to the bitter person how much others around them may seek to please them. Nothing can be done good enough or when they want it. No one can please the bitter person -- **NO ONE!**

Such a person is unthankful for meals, for clothes washed, for anything done for them. For them ingratitude and unthankfulness is a way of life. So doing they set themselves up for moral failure and many other sins.

4. *The bitter person will manifest much **tension** and usually sense a lot of **rejection** and will give rejection to others.*

This rejection has come into his life because he isolated himself from others by his bitter spirit. Others seek to leave him alone so they won't be hurt. Much of the rejection is brought on himself.

King Saul manifested all of these elements in his life because of his bitter spirit toward David. He had a lot of mental and emotional illness due to his bitterness toward David. In the process he also felt that God had abandoned him.

5. *A bitter person will also have **distrust** toward others.*

King Saul is another example of total distrust, even of his own son, Jonathan. The bitter person can come to the place of manifesting distrust of almost everyone else in life. He may feel everybody is out to get him or to hurt him. He doesn't trust anyone.

6. Self-rejection can take place in the life of the bitter person.

Many a bitter person hates himself. He may hate his lot in life and life itself. He may come to the place of hating himself for the trap he feels he is in and, seemingly, there is no way out. This trap is one of his own making and yet, usually, the bitter person does not want to face that fact.

7. The bitter person actually becomes ill from the result of his bitter spirit. (See Psa. 32:1-5.) Bitterness brings its own emotionally induced illnesses just as unresolved, unconfessed and unforsaken sin can bring illness in the life of the saint of God.

A medical doctor wrote the book "*None of These Diseases!*" in which he states there are over 50 emotionally induced illnesses known to man. These include such things as ulcers, colitis, heart attacks, etc.

### What Can We Do to Resolve Bitterness?

If the one who is bitter and resentful has never trusted Christ as Savior, that decision is there they must begin. Those who know they are forgiven are then able to forgive others. Often at the root of our bitterness is unforgiveness toward those around us.

If you are unsaved, you need to come to Christ and receive Him as your Lord and Savior. Invite the Person of Christ into your life and trust Him for the forgiveness of your sins as you confess them and repent concerning your sins.

1. If you are saved, **confess** the sin of bitterness and resentment.

There must be a thorough confession. You must recognize what is behind your bitterness and how you developed it. (See I John 1:7,9; James 5:16.)

2. See **GOD'S HAND** through the offense and through the offender.

God is at work in your life. He is trying to bring maturity, dependency toward Him, submission, and obedience in your life. You need to be aware that God is using the offense and the offender to bring good results in your life.

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Joseph could have been bitter over what his brothers did to him. He did not become bitter, but he knew that God was at work. (See Gen. 50:20.)

3. **Thank God for the offense.**

(See James 1:2,3, Phil. 4:6-8; Rom. 5:1-5; Eph. 5:20; I Thess. 5:18.)

4. **Fully forgive the offender!**

Forgiveness is an **act** or action whereby you release the offender from the offense. **You set the person free** from whatever you resented and allowed to bring bitterness in your life.

Forgiveness is also a **change in attitude**, whereby **you cease being resentful.**

5. **Restore love by acts of investment in the life of the one who has offended**

**you.** (I Cor. 13:1-8; John 13:34, 35; Rom. 12:20.)

### Consider the Following

1. Love does not demand its own way. It is not irritable or touchy. It does not hold grudges and will hardly even notice when others do it wrong.

This is what I Corinthians 13:5 teaches; how do you respond in comparison? \_\_\_\_\_

2. How are others effected by your resentment and bitterness?

Do you SEE what you are doing?

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3. If you allow the Holy Spirit to rule and reign in your life, what will He produce according to Galatians 5:22,23?

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4. What does James 3:14 each us?

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5. What is the counsel of Psalms 37:17

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6. List some things from Galatians 5:24-26, you should do, that will make a difference.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

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b. \_\_\_\_\_

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c. \_\_\_\_\_

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d. \_\_\_\_\_

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7. What are we to “lay aside” according to I Peter 2:1?

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8. What is malice?

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9. What does God say about “hate” in I John 2:9?

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10. How serious is hatred, anger, and sinful actions according to Matthew 5:22?

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-- Dr. Edward Watke Jr.