

Bitterness Will Destroy You

“Let all bitterness . . . be put away from you.”
Ephesians 4:31-32

I. The DEFINITION

- A. **Bitterness.** Intense animosity or virulence of feeling; virulent. **Virulent.** Violently bitter, spiteful, or malignant; full of acrimony or enmity. **Acrimony.** Sharp or irritating bitterness of disposition or manner. **Bitter.** Obnoxious or irritating to the taste; disagreeable to the palate, the opposite of sweet; causing ‘the proper pain of taste.’
- B. It includes revenge and hatred (II Sam 2:26), envy and covetousness (Acts 8:23), cursing (Ro 3:14), anger and criticism (Job 13:26; Ps 64:2-4; Ep 4:31), and trouble (Heb 12:15).
- C. Bitterness is a soul and heart soured and made bitter by harboring animosity, envy, resentment, disappointment, revenge, unforgiveness, and grudges for another’s offences that result in an unhappy and critical and unkind and discontented disposition and outlook toward the offending parties or life in general.

II. The SYMPTOMS

- A. Criticizing and complaining speech indicate bitterness (Jas 3:9-11; Ep 4:31; Pr 16:27-28).
- B. Strife, envy, harshness, and disagreeableness are all further symptoms (James 3:14-18).
- C. Bitterness is the opposite of a peaceable, gentle, easily intreated, and merciful spirit.
- D. Bitterness is the opposite of a kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving spirit (Eph 4:31-32).
- E. Bitterness is the opposite of cheerfulness and worse than necessity (II Corinthians 9:7).
- F. Biting and devouring one another without love shows bitterness (Galatians 5:13-15,26).
- G. Bitterness is holding the sins of others without giving full forgiveness (Matthew 6:14-15).
- H. Look for the sullen, morose, depressed, unhappy, discontented, and negative appearance.
- I. Listen for the sharp, critical, sarcastic, biting, negative, pessimistic, self-righteous tongue.

III. The PROBLEM

- A. We have strong lusts in our hearts that freely choose bitterness and fighting over love and peace (James 4:1,5).
- B. Bitterness grows. It does not stay the same. It is destroyed or it destroys (Heb 12:14-16).
- C. Marriages are destroyed by this enemy, as spouses allow seeds of bitterness to grow.
 - 1. Marriage is a personal and intimate relationship where we see the other’s faults.
 - 2. Marriage is a power relationship where proper leadership/submission is essential.
 - 3. Marriage is a cooperative relationship where spouses must cooperate willingly.
- D. Parents and children often have bitterness between them from intimacy and authority.
- E. Church brothers and sisters are brought together by the work of God and may be difficult.
- F. Authority is often involved in bitterness, because of the difficulty of submitting while harboring bitterness and the difficulty of ruling kindly and fairly while harboring it.
- G. Physical, mental, emotional, and other illnesses can result from bitterness (Prov 14:30).
- H. Anger and wrath are cruel, but no man is able to stand before envy (Proverbs 27:4).
- I. Bitterness holds faults in memory for an opportunity to unleash them all at once in anger.
- J. Bitterness leads hearts to look for and rejoice in further faults in its object of scorn.
- K. Bitterness takes pleasure in remembering faults to justify its hatred, scorn, and rebellion.
- L. Holding hatred and enmity toward others breaks the sixth commandment (Mat 5:21-22).

IV. The EXAMPLES

- A. Joseph's brethren were bitter against Joseph with sibling jealousy (Genesis 37:1-4,18-35).
- B. Ahab was bitter against Naboth for not selling his God-given inheritance (I Kgs 21:1-7).
- C. Absalom was bitter against Amnon for what he had done to Tamar (II Samuel 13:20-29).
- D. Jonah was bitter against the Ninevites likely for nationalistic envy (Jonah 1:1-3; 4:1-4).
- E. Herodias was bitter against John the Baptist for condemning her adultery (Mark 6:19).
- F. Philemon was bitter against Onesimus for running from his service (Philemon 1:10-21).

V. The COMMANDMENT

- A. God has spoken: we must replace bitterness with tenderhearted forgiveness (Ep 4:31-32).
- B. God has spoken: husbands must love their wives without bitterness (Colossians 3:19).
- C. God has spoken: we must not bear any grudges against neighbors (Leviticus 19:16-18).
- D. God has spoken: we cannot bear grudges against others lest we be condemned (Jas 5:9).
- E. God has spoken: bitterness, hatred, and anger break commandment six (Matt 5:21-22).
- F. God has spoken: growing in your Christian life condemns any bitterness (I Peter 2:1-3).
- G. God has spoken: true Christians love one another in bitterness-free charity (I Cor 13:4-7).

VI. The CURE

- A. Jesus Christ giveth more grace for us to be victors over this wickedness (James 4:6-10).
- B. Several have obtained victories from the Lord and great freedom from this evil enemy.
- C. Hannah turned her grievous and bitter complaint over to the Lord (I Samuel 1:1-18).
- D. Identify your bitterness by examining your heart and soul to find any critical thinking.
- E. Ask God to assist your search according to David's personal prayer (Psalm 139:23-24).
- F. Confess it as a sin and repudiate the wicked hatred in holding grudges (Job 33:27-28).
- G. Praying for your enemies is a sure work of godliness and cure for hatred (Matt 5:43-48).
- H. Replace it with service, prayer, blessing, and love for the same ones whom you hated.
- I. Confrontation cures bitterness if done properly and repentance is secured (Mat 18:15-17).
- J. Offences must be ignored totally (Pr 19:11) or resolved by confrontation (Mat 18:15-17).
- K. No one likes confrontation or communication about problems, but it must be done often.
- L. Husbands must take a leading role eradicating bitterness in their marriage and family.
- M. Confess your bitterness to its objects and ask for their forgiveness. What might happen?
- N. Wives may point out sin in a husband, so encourage it. But they better be prudent.
- O. Can't every couple go home tonight and confess their bitterness and wipe the slate clean?
- P. We must take the time for marital cleansing by confessing and confronting bitterness.
- Q. If we could have the mind of Christ, we would view others properly (Philippians 2:1-4).