

Getting Beyond Bitterness

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- ❖ Bitterness is harboring resentment and rage against yourself, others, God, or some event.
- ❖ Bitterness is a natural reaction to hurt and unmet expectations that everyone will experience, but bitterness held onto for a long time only hurts you.
- ❖ Most of the time, the person you are bitter against isn't even aware of your resentment, or the depth of your feelings. They get on with their lives while bitterness eats you alive!

How Bitterness Hurts You

1. **Bitterness Blinds:** Bitterness can blind you to the one thing you have the power to change and influence--yourself. It is impossible to change a past event, or another person.
2. **Bitterness Consumes:** Bitterness can easily turn into an obsession if you take a thought or hurt and re-run it over and over in your mind. Obsessions often begin with phrases like: "I can't believe...", "Why did they...", or, "How could God allow..."
3. **Bitterness Isolates:** Healthy relationships are built on honesty. Harboring hurt, resentment, or rage only isolates you from people. If bitterness goes unchecked it may lead to a "you vs. them" mentality, rigidity, an attitude of authoritarianism, religious arrogance, closed communications, or lack of energy.
4. **Bitterness Changes:** Bitterness makes you into the very thing you hate and want to avoid. If you hold judgment against another, you will eventually find yourself guilty of the same things that you resent them for. (See Romans 2:1)
5. **Bitterness Destroys:** Bitterness is at the root of many stress-related illnesses such as headaches, tension, anxiety, heart problems, ulcers, colitis, a weak immune system and depression. Bitterness causes your body to rise to a challenge that is never resolved. When this response is repeated over and over again, your body begins to break down.

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How to Resolve Bitterness

- 1. Take Your Hurt Seriously:** Emotional hurts fester without care, so recognize and care for your own hurt. It is easy for many people to see the hurts of others as legitimate and ignore their own hurts. Opening up by sharing your hurt with God and others is vital for healing to occur.
- 2. Use Feeling Statements:** Healing starts when you turn your feelings of bitterness into “I Am Feeling” statements. Identify your underlying feelings and say, “I am feeling: hurt, embarrassed, humiliated, betrayed, lonely, defeated, stolen from, jealous, rejected, raped, laughed at, ridiculed, disrespected, undervalued.”
- 3. Evict Obsessive Thoughts:** Set up a conveyor belt in your mind. Every time you begin to dwell on an obsessive thought, put it on the conveyor belt and send it to God. If it shows up again, repeat the process! Break the power of obsessions by: identifying them, sending them to God, and confessing them to a friend.
- 4. Break Negative Vows:** If you have vowed, “I’ll never open up my feelings to another person again,” break that vow with a conscious decision. Your sensitivity to God’s spirit and open heart to an honest friend or counselor will help you break negative vows. Trusting, sharing, and risking again involve action on your part.
- 5. Practice Forgiveness:** Forgiveness is giving up the temptation to hold judgment and condemnation in your heart against another person or event. Forgiveness helps you to let go of what you cannot do or change. It doesn’t mean making yourself into a target to be hurt again. If you discover that you have disappointed or hurt others, admit your shortcomings and seek reconciliation whenever possible.

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