

## **Care Giving For The Bitter** **“Bitterness Defined and How It Works”**

Why are people bitter? Maybe their wife left them; their husband left them; their parents divorced and made life hard or miserable for them; health problems; loss of a job; missed out on their retirement package after working for a company for 29 ½ years. All kinds of things can cause bitterness!

Why are people bitter? Why are they having these struggles? And what can we do to help them, because we know that there is help for the bitter!

Bitterness is a waste of emotion, a waste of time and waste of life.

*Heb 12:15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;*

Romans tells us: *Rom 3:14 Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:*

Mankind’s mouth is full of cursing and bitterness today! Many are defiled by the root of bitterness.

Today, I want to talk to you first on the subject of **“Bitterness Defined and How It Works.”**  
This is probably the first of a three-part teaching on this subject.

Bitterness causes a hurt that is too difficult for individuals to bear. It is no way to live, it is no solution to your problems to remain in that state. It is a wasted emotion.

### **I. Let’s look at the Definition of the word “Bitter,” in the context of our teaching.**

- a. Sharp; cruel; severe; as bitter enmity. Heb.1.
- b. Sharp, as words, reproachful; sarcastic. “Biting Back” Bitter=Biter! (Latin Word)
- c. Painful to the mind; Affliction; distress of mind  
The Egyptians made the Israelites lives bitter. Ex.1.
- d. Hurtful; very sinful. Is an evil and bitter thing. Jer.2.
- e. Mournful; distressing; expression of misery; as a bitter complaint or lamentation.  
Job.23. Jer.6.31.

Often times we lash out and bite the hand of the one who loves us the most. Some people say that a man’s best friend is his dog. And you can care for that dog, feed that dog, show affection to that dog, meet that dogs every need, but you step on its paw or its tale accidentally and it may turn against you, growl and bite you back!

Bitterness is biting back at some one, even the very one that loves him and cares for him the most.

### **II. Bitterness begins with a man’s failure to appropriate the grace of God.**

Notice our text: *Heb 12:15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God;*

God’s grace will never fail any man, but a man can fail God’s grace. Man often fails to go to God for His grace in times of need.

*Heb 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

There is grace for everyone to help them in their particular time of need! And we know that God’s grace is sufficient for us. It can and will help us through any pain; through any trial or financial loss; through any marriage difficulties; through the struggles we encounter rearing our children; through any job loss; persecution; trial; suffering; or health problems. His grace is greater than all of these.

God’s grace is divine enablement, enabling you and I to be able to go through anything! BUT... It is not ours, unless we ask for it. It is not ours unless we go to that throne of God. Read that verse again. God’s throne is called “the throne of grace.”

2 Cor 12:7-10 *And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. 8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. 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. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.*

We believe that Paul's problem was a physical problem. That it may very well have been his poor eyesight. Those at Galatia felt so badly for him that the scripture says; *Gal 4:15 ...that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.*

Luke, the physician accompanied Paul on many a journey.

He took that thing to the Lord three times, that it might depart from him, but God's reply was "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Paul had a physical problem that he was never healed of throughout his whole ministry.

He did not have to get bitter at God, because, God enabled him, He gave him that divine enablement, to bear that infirmity, by His grace.

We believe Paul to be the writer of the Book of Hebrews. So look at again what he said:

*Heb 12:15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God;*

God's grace has never failed a human being, but so many fail to appropriate to themselves God's grace when they needed it the most. And that is another step toward bitterness.

Grace is available to every believer at any time! We just need to keep going to Him for it.

### **III. Bitterness begins unseen:**

*Heb 12:15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;*

Did you ever have a garden? You can't just go out and cut down the weeds, you have to pull them out by the roots or they will just grow back again with a vengeance!

Bitterness begins as a root, something unseen. Its potential to take root and grow is in perhaps in all of us, if we don't get rid of it. In our gardens, if we just cut the weeds down, a week later we will have the same problem. You see, we must get the roots out for them not to grow back again.

The scripture teaches us: "Looking diligently," that means look inside of yourself, examine yourself, look carefully... Is there a small tiny root of bitterness starting to take root in your life? It grows up inside of you. It usually cannot be detected outwardly in a human being until it is full blow or full-grown.

### **IV. The root springs up!**

*Heb 12:15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;*

A root springs up. A root grows and gets bigger and bigger and bigger. Do you know that weeds can get up to eight feet tall? Have you ever tried to get rid of them?

(Ex. Sumac trees in my yard grow at a phenomenal rate) You can't pull them out, it seems impossible! You can't believe how strong a root, a weed can take hold.

Weeds are a curse! They are part of the curse that the Lord placed upon the earth, according to Gen. 3.

I have seen bitterness take its root in people so strong that you can't get it out. It becomes part of their character. People get so bitter over things.

#### **V. Bitterness troubles the bitter person.**

*Heb 12:15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;*

The bitter person is the one troubled the most by their own bitterness. They might be mad at God or the preacher or some other human being, but they are the ones who are troubled the most! The other party may not have the slightest clue that there might be a problem or a concern.

You are your own worst enemy!

#### **VI. Many become defiled by our bitterness:**

*Heb 12:15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;*

What does that mean? To the bitter individual, nobody is any good. They will tell you that life is no good, the church is no good, the pastor is no good, the pastor's wife is no good, the ministries are all no good, my friends are no good, family is no good, my neighbors are no good, my job is no good, my boss is no good... Everything and everyone becomes defiled by that person's bitterness.

You have heard the story of the man who ate Limburger cheese haven't you? He had a sandwich of it one day, and some of it remained on his upper lip and in his beard and mustache. Everything in life to him began to stink! He got fed up with his wife, kids, house, job, church, and left to find some place else to live, but wherever he went everything just stank! He crossed the continents looking for peace, joy and harmony to life, but everywhere he went he said, "This place stinks!"

One day an individual pointed out to him that he had something in his beard, so he washed it and combed it out. Everything smelled great again!

The moral of the story is... the problem was with him! It wasn't with anybody else. He didn't need a new wife, a new car, a different job or change of scenery to start a better life.

That's the trouble with bitterness. It springs up and troubles you and then causes everybody else to be defiled.

We had an individual leave our church some time ago and that person said to me, that this church is not a blessed church. That person was basically saying, "That there is no one in that church who is holy, they are all worldly, they are all ungodly, they are all a bunch of hypocrites and literally just condemned this church!"

My wife and I encouraged that individual to look at their life introspectively. I know that in the truest sense of the word none of us are truly as holy as we ought to be, but that we have a lot of people in our church who are really sincere people who are pursuing a life of holiness, who love the Lord and want to do right. But that individual couldn't see any of it.

The bitter person doesn't see and can't rejoice when souls are saved and lives are being changed by the gospel. They can't see the church growing, not just numerically but spiritually in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The bitter person can never enjoy their church, their society, their family, their friends, their neighbors and they can never enjoy themselves.

Dr. Jeff Owens said this in his book about bitterness, "I liken a bitter person to a mason. A bitter person emotionally builds a wall of bricks between himself and the person with whom he is bitter. Slowly but surely he constructs an unbreakable wall by the mortaring of brick after brick after brick of bitterness into that wall as a shield of protection emotionally. The only problem with building a wall is that, that wall will conceal and separate the bitter person from everyone and sometimes even God!"

The more walls you build in your life the harder it will be for you to get around. Eventually you will box yourself in and won't be able to get out.

The preacher says, "God loves you," and the embittered person says, "I don't see how or why God would love me." Why? He is unable to receive and appropriate the love of God because his wall of protection is always kept him from accepting and expressing love.

A bitter person would often like to tell someone that he loves him but he holds his feelings inside. When someone says to the bitter person, "I love you," the bitter person doesn't believe it. He doesn't have the love flowing back and forth between him and the other person or between him and God.

Bitterness poisons his system. He is building a wall that is shielding him rather than protecting him. All because of one person with whom he is bitter. He thinks that the wall he has constructed is only going to affect that one person to whom he had targeted his bitterness. Now basically, it has made him or her dysfunctional in life.

Everyone becomes no good to the embittered person when in fact it is the bitter person who becomes no good!

## **Care giving For the Bitter Part II (The Causes Of Bitterness)**

*Eph 4:31-32 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: 32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

What are the causes of bitterness? That is what I would like to investigate next. Now, when I ask this question, I am not saying that there are justifications for it. There is no justification for bitterness. That person has failed to appropriate the grace of God in their lives.

*Heb 12:15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;*

When you have fallen into a bitter state against an individual, you have failed! You have failed to partake of the grace of God in the situation. Nobody should get bitter.

**What are the causes of Bitterness? Let's look at some.**

### **1. Parental failures:**

a. The expectation of a child toward his mother or father to live up to his certain standards or expectations. When they fail to do that, it can sometimes leave people bitter.

Sometimes parents get too busy in their lives with their jobs, with their houses, with their friends, with their hobbies, with their recreation, their television, and their sports. They get so wrapped up into these things that they forget about their children, and they ignore their children to the point sometimes, that they don't even exist!

Then kids get in trouble, sometimes even in trouble with the law, just to try to get their parents attention. They become criminals just to get your attention. They join street gangs just to get a feeling of belonging to something. That daughter may run off with the first boy who comes along and shows them attention. Parents... spend time with your children!

b. Another area where parents fail their children and that is a cause of bitterness is by showing favoritism or partiality toward the other. You can read about that story in...

*Gen 27:33-38 And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who? where is he that hath taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? yea, and he shall be blessed. 34 And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father. 35 And he said, Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing. 36 And he said, Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me? 37 And Isaac answered and said unto Esau, Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants; and with corn and wine have I sustained him: and what shall I do now unto thee, my son? 38 And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept.*

Why was Esau bitter? Because he saw that his parents preferred Jacob over him. In this story it is specifically the fault of the mother. For 22 years Esau was trying to kill his brother.

Parents, I want to warn you, you must love all of your children equally. And you need to make sure that they know it. You may have to love them differently because they have different personalities and interests, but you have to love them equally.

You cannot show favoritism. If one of your children is extremely gifted, talented, educated or athletic and the other is not, you cannot love them unequally. If one of them is a black sheep, you have to love him just as much. Maybe even more!

In this day and age, there are a lot of blended families. Let me say this, you have got to give up your favoritism of your children over your mates children. You have got to love them equally!

I know that this situation is never going to be perfect, like the Brady Bunch, but never show favoritism towards one of them. Be fair with them all, treat them all equally or you will sow the seed and produce a root of bitterness in your children.

There was a similar problem years later with Jacob's children. He had twelve sons in all.

*Gen 37:3-4 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours. 4 And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.*

You know the story... As a result, Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers!

Partiality causes bitterness, because of the favoritism that the parents showed toward one over the other.

c. Divorce is another parental failure that can cause bitterness in our children. If you are a parent who has gone through a divorce you must reassure your children over and over and over again that it was not their fault. You have to, because that is exactly what the kids are thinking, that it was all their fault! They don't have the mind of an adult, it hurts, and it's painful.

They get bitter and say, couldn't you have tried harder? Why couldn't you have stayed together? Was that such a big issue? Why did you leave mom for a younger woman? Were we kids that big of a burden that you just couldn't come home any more? Were we such a problem that you two just couldn't work things out? Why? Why? Why? They are hurt!

Parents, a child's whole world revolves around their mother and father. When everything is right with their mother and father, then everything is right in their world. And conversely, when everything is wrong with their mother and father, then everything is wrong in their world.

Men, the greatest thing you can do for your children is to love their mother!

*Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;*

Wives, love your husbands. Have a good marriage. Let him make the living, and you make life worth living!

These things are a main cause of bitterness in our children's lives. I am not saying that they justify bitterness, don't get me wrong.

Can I say this parents? There is not much you can do after the fact, after a divorce. But you can pray with them when you are afforded the opportunity. It wouldn't even hurt if you apologized to your children for your failures as a parent. Reassure to your children just how much you love them and how important they are to you.

Those twelve most powerful words in the English language are: "I am sorry," "I was wrong," "please forgive me," "I love you."

Many times I sat my children down and told them that I have made mistakes, that I am not perfect, apologized and told them that I am trying to be a good father to them.

*Prov 25:15 ...a soft tongue breaketh the bone.*

*Prov 15:1 A soft answer turneth away wrath:*

## **2. Disappointment to Leadership:**

Sometimes our leaders disappoint us causing us to become bitter. There are stories in the Bible where it appears that leaders disappoint us.

a. Martha was disappointed in Jesus Christ for letting her brother Lazarus die! She sent for Jesus while her brother was still living.

*John 11:2-7 (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) 3 Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. 4 When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. 5 Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. 6 When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was. 7 Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judaea again.*

*John 11:20-21 Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house. 21 Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. (You're the fault that he died!)*

Sometimes, leaders apparently disappoint us. And there are people who are disappointed with God! Why? Because they don't see the whole picture but only those things from our very very limited views. We don't understand the acts of God sometimes, and we end up bitter as a result.

b. David had a friend named Uzzah, (2 Sam.6), David was trying to bring the Ark of God back home to Jerusalem after it had been captured, for the first time in history, by the Philistine army. The Philistine had possession of it for about seven months and were cursed by it. So David says it is time to bring the Ark back, so he places it on a new cart being pulled by cattle.

Let's read...

*2 Sam 6:3-8 And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drave the new cart. 4 And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab which was at Gibeah, accompanying the ark of God: and Ahio went before the ark. 5 And David and all the house of Israel played before the LORD on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals. 6 And when they came to*

*Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. 7 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God. 8 And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzzah: and he called the name of the place Perez-uzzah to this day.*

*2 Sam 6:9-10 And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and said, How shall the ark of the LORD come to me? 10 So David would not remove the ark of the LORD unto him into the city of David: but David carried it aside into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite.*

I really think that David thought that God made a mistake here. You can almost hear David speak out loud saying, “God, you didn’t have to be so harsh, we were having a good time, we were happy, singing praises, trying to bring that Ark back home where it belonged...”

But they were doing it all wrong! There were specific rules for moving the Ark of God. It was not to be touched, but rather two long polls or staffs were to slide through the four rings that were on the corners of the Ark, and a certain, sanctified group of Levites were commissioned to lift that Ark and carry it to its destination. It was even suppose to be covered so that no one saw the thing! They were doing things all wrong, no matter their good intentions. They knew better!

They were not doing things God’s way!

Uzzah tried to help God out, and for the first time a human being touched the Ark of God, that Holy piece of furniture that represented the presence of God, and God smote him to the ground! And all the music stopped, all the praising stopped didn’t it? And now the leader was mad. He would not talk to the Lord for a while. He was afraid of the Lord.

Sometime later, David got his heart right with God, admitted that it was our fault, not Gods! They did not move it according to the designated divine order, so they went back and did it right!

There are times when disappointment with leadership can cause people to be bitter, like the Martha’s and the David’s of the Bible where they think God has made a mistake.

c. There are times when human leadership can lead to bitterness. There have been times when preachers have gone off and committed adultery, go off and embezzle funds, preachers make wrong decisions, times when they are too harsh, when they say things too strongly perhaps. I realize that there are times like that, but none of those will be excuses for us when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account of ourselves before God.

The best of men are men at best, preachers do make mistakes. If I had quit every time my pastor or a pastor friend of mine messed up, I would have been out of the ministry years ago!

Some of the greatest preachers and missionaries that I have ever met and who have influenced my life and my families life the most, are not in the ministry today because they fell into some sin and got knocked out of the race.

It’s heart breaking!

Some of them aren’t even in church on Sunday’s! I know preachers who are now working in nursing homes, driving taxicabs, and building furniture in their barn, and are not in leadership positions any more because of their sin.

Some that I have admired and believed that they have had the anointed power of God on their lives, have left the ministry and are now hanging dry wall, and painting houses for a living.

We are to learn from our leaders, glean from them, and follow them as they follow Christ. But as soon as they don’t, we keep our eyes on the Lord and continue to follow Him! We have got to realize that sometimes leadership causes disappointments, but it never should!

d. *2 Sam 17:23 And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father.*

Here is an individual when his advise was not followed he went out and killed himself. "I'll show them, I'm going to go out and hang myself!"

Folks, listen to me... There are going to be times when you think you have the greatest idea on planet earth, and nobody is going to give you the time of day. Don't be bitter! Be humble. Realize that someone might even have a better idea.

Ahithophel was disappointed in leadership. "He didn't do what I recommended, He didn't do what I've asked him to do. He didn't take my suggestion. That's it, I'm through, and I'm out of here!"

### **3. Physical, sexual and Emotional abuse is a cause for bitterness**

(again, not a justification for it)

Some of these causes are very deep. I wish we could just tell people to quit it and get over it, but it is not that simple.

a. Since the 1960's this disgusting and disgraceful trend has hurt scores of silent victims. These silent victims are embarrassed thinking they have done something wrong and have become embittered.

Sometime in there past their innocence was overpowered and they were defenseless to protect themselves, and as a result a part of them died that day. They become bitter toward that person, and as a result they build a wall against all people and even toward God sometimes. This is one of the most despicable sins of our day. I feel sorry for these people when they have to stand one day before God. I hope that they get saved. I can't imagine what God is going to do to them.

*Rom 12:19 Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*

Jesus said... *Matt 18:5-6 And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. 6 But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.*

On another occasion Jesus said... *Mark 14:21 ...good were it for that man if he had never been born.*

We all need to careful of our flesh and to keep it in order. Don't you ever offend a little child. Young men... Every young lady is some mans daughter. Every young lady is some mother's daughter. Don't you play and mess around with her emotions and her innocence. It is not funny to God!

Men, stay away from the young ladies, and you young ladies, stay away from the men. We need to watch how we treat the children. It better be with every ounce of purity that we have in us.

There are a lot of people that we will cross paths with us in this church who have been sexually, physically and emotionally abused. It is our responsibility to introduce them to Jesus, because that is where the healing begins in your life.

b. Society itself can be abusive and make one bitter with its hard bondage!

*Ex 1:13-14 And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour: 14 And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour.*

Some are bitter with society because they can't break out of the bondage of poverty and they are bitter because they have to resort to food stamps and government assisted programs to survive.

Sometimes people are humiliated by being beaten, whipped, kicked, or slapped in front of their siblings or some of their friends.

Let me give you parents some advise tonight. Whenever you are going to correct one of your children, take them aside privately and don't embarrass them in front of their peers. Deal with them! Deal with them severely if you have to. They will appreciate you protecting them in that way.

c. Verbal abuse: Being called names like stupid, idiot, ugly, lazy, retard, maybe having some of ones physical attributes mocked (big ears, a big nose or some skin abnormality).

Do you know what? Name calling hurts! That tongue of yours... *James 3:8 ...is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.*

How many know that kids in school or the talk on the bus ride home can be cruel to your child's well being? I was one of the last families to be picked up in the morning route and one of the first to be dropped off on the way home from school, but I walked the two and a half miles there and the two and a half miles back home so I didn't have to take the verbal abuse from my peers.

**4. Unrealized Expectations:** In other words, simply, not getting what you want!

a. Some people think they are going to get married and live happily ever after, Cinderella Syndrome." They dream about that knight in shining armor! They have been watching too much Walt Disney, too much of Hollywood where in one hour everything is fixed and perfect again.

b. I remember in school many of the students would get mad at the coaches because they were not picked for the team, or spent a majority of the time on the benches as second or third string material. I remember the fights, arguments, the hard feelings, the bitterness which was the result of much of it.

c. Let's look at the Bible for another example. Don't get mad at me for pointing this out either. This is what the Bible says.

*Col 3:19 Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.*

Unfortunately, the imagination of men's hearts are evil from their youth up, the Bible says, (Gen. 8:21).

Men are prone to imagine and fantasize in their minds. There is not a woman who has ever been created that can fulfill those imaginations or fantasies of the average man's mind. So, man gets married, has these very high expectations for his wife and they are not realized. No woman could ever realize them. They cannot possibly be the active, energetic, super models, Miss Universe, with the Barbie Doll type of figure, with her nails done, lipstick on, hair blown dry, and dressed beautifully, 24 hrs a day and still take care of the children, do the housework, do the laundry, and cook your meals for you.

There are too many expectations from a man toward his wife. On any given day, she may have accomplished a lot and when he comes home and sees that the house is messy or his dinner isn't on the table waiting for him he goes ballistic and starts screaming at her saying, "what have you been doing all day?"

He expects his wife to be a mind reader, to know exactly what he wants and when he wants it, and goes off and throws his temper tantrum when things don't go just perfectly. Meanwhile, she is clueless as to what his problem is and why he is acting that way.

Men... God says... *Col 3:19 Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.*

Why don't you just thank God for them and ask the Lord to help you to be content with who you have. Remember that you have made a vow to God "for better or for worse" to her and "till death do you part."

Men can be such perfectionist that they may never be satisfied with anything or anybody.

**5. Jealousy and envy causes bitterness:**

*1 Kings 21:4 And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him: for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers. And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.*

Ahab wanted something his neighbor Naboth had. It was his vineyard! When he was refused, or denied, he went home and pouted on his bed. He threw an adult temper tantrum! He was angry, hurt, jealous and envious of his neighbor's garden. And that caused bitterness and even death!

(Ex. My neighbors in Rochester were mad at my wife and I because they couldn't keep up with us in purchasing new appliances for our home.)

**6. Rejection By Peers:**

Everybody wants to belong. Maybe this is the real problem that existed at Columbine, where some 15 students were shot to death, and 23 others were wounded. These shooters were rejected by their peers. They didn't fit in, they weren't accepted, they weren't loved, and others who didn't receive them mocked them.

(AGAIN... I AM NOT SAYING THAT THESE THINGS JUSTIFY BITTERNESS) I am just saying that these are the causes and we will get to the solutions later.

This is probably why most gangs are formed, because their peers, made outcasts, have rejected them and they are looking to belong to something. They just want to be accepted.

Sometimes to prove a point a bitter person will go against what he knows to be right.

### **7. Oppression causes bitterness:**

*2 Kings 14:26 For the LORD saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter: for there was not any shut up, nor any left, nor any helper for Israel.*

This is concerning the nation of Israel when they were under the oppressive hand of Egypt.

Solomon said, *Eccl 7:7 Surely oppression maketh a wise man mad;*

When word went out that all the Jews were to be killed in the Book of Esther we read...

*Est 4:1 When Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry:* That oppression caused Mordecai to cry a bitter cry.

Oppression has caused a lot of bitterness in people, especially in areas like prejudice and racism. An oppressed people are very prone to become bitter over their situation and not function properly. They let it get to them. Life is not fair! It never has been and probably never will be, till Jesus comes!

We can make the best out of situations and let God bless us.

### **8. Sickness and Death can cause bitterness:**

a. Job experienced this, but let me say this, he didn't have the scriptures to rely upon... we do!

Did you ever stop and think that we have more scriptures than even the Apostle Paul had in his day? If there were ever a people who should not be taken in bitterness, it ought to be God's people today.

We have all the tools, we have all the Biblical examples, over 6000 years of history to rely upon, and we have the complete revelation of the Bible, the answer book!

The Book of Job, it is said is the earliest recorded book in the Bible. If that is the case, he didn't have one chapter, one verse, and yea one word to fall back on through his struggles.

He said... *Job 7:11 Therefore I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.*

*Job 23:1-4 Then Job answered and said, 2 Even to day is my complaint bitter: my stroke is heavier than my groaning. 3 Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! 4 I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments.*

Death can produce bitterness: He lost 7 sons and 3 daughters!

b. *Jer 31:15 Thus saith the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not.* Bitterness over her children dying.

c. *1 Sam 15:32 Then said Samuel, Bring ye hither to me Agag the king of the Amalekites. And Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past.*

Again, these are not justifications for bitterness but some causes for it. We as Care Givers are going to come across bitter people, (although I don't believe you will see that many of them in church, because most don't come to church), and we must realize and understand what makes people bitter.

Usually, bitter people do not allow God a chance to speak to them.

### **9. A Foolish Child can cause bitterness to his parents.**

*Prov 17:25 A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him.*

Children have no idea how much their parents love them. They have no idea and simply do not understand the special bond that their mother has for them.

My wife and I have three children: Aaron, Bradley & Emily. My wife and I have poured our whole hearts into them. If one of them became foolish, we might be tempted to become bitter about it. We might be tempted to say, "What kind of a son or daughter are you?" We have labored and put so much money, effort and time into training you. We have prayed for you, did our very best to educate you, clothed you, fed you, did things with you..."

If you are not careful mom and dad, a wayward son or daughter can cause bitterness in you.

Some of you have wayward sons or daughters and you are hurting! If you are not careful, bitterness can consume you. My advise to you is to remember that love never fails. We must continue to love the wayward child, keep the doors of reconciliation open.

The Prodigal son walked away from the Lord and the Father watched for his return every day! And when the son came back, he didn't rail on him and call him a no good son so. No. He ran to him, fell on his neck, hugged him and kissed him, and wept! He killed the fatted calf, put a ring on his finger, shoes on his feet, placed a robe on him and had a big feast!

*Luke 15:24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.*

The Father never got bitter! If anybody would have a cause to be bitter it ought to be God. The way the human race has treated him? They curse the name of Jesus Christ; They defile his name, yet God is feeding them, God is clothing them, God is giving them health and life, and God is giving them breath. Their very existence depends on God. His children have wandered off into this world loving the pleasures of sin, ignoring or at least not acknowledging God in their lives.

Yet he loves them. Why? *Rom 2:4 ...knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.*

He just keeps being good to them, knowing they will repent and turn to Him. I don't know about you, but that has worked for me. Many a time I have treated God lousy, disrespectfully, disobediently, and when I realized just how good he was to me, it caused sorrow in my heart and caused me to turn back to Him and say, "I'm sorry!" "I'm so sorry for the way I have treated you, please forgive me Lord."

*1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

*2 Peter 3:9 ...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

Parents, just keep loving your children. Leave the door of your heart open for them to come home!

## **10. Chastisement** (Heb. 12:5-11)

Chastisement is not pleasant, but is the plan for every one of God's children.

*Heb 12:6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*

Eventually, the Lord will bring his divine hand on all of us when we go wayward. So my advise is... Don't go wayward! Spare yourself of that. God will deal with his children when we go wayward.

*Heb 12:11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.*

God makes us better by chastening us. If we don't accept this in the proper manner we might become bitter!

When Naomi returned from Moab, they all looked at her and said, wow! Something has happened to Naomi. She sure has gotten old in the last ten years!

*Ruth 1:19-21 And it came to pass, when they were come to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, Is this Naomi? 20 And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. 21 I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?*

God afflicts his people some times.

Job said... *Job 2:10 What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?*

We have been the recipients of God's goodness for so long that when we receive affliction or chastisement from him, we think that he has done an injustice to us!

But all of God's judgments are according to truth, and when he chastises us it is because we need it.

*Ps 119:75 I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.*

It is God's faithfulness towards us that causes this affliction sometimes in our lives. He wants to make us better! When I spanked my children when they were growing up it was because I wanted to make them better, not because I wanted to abuse them. I wanted to put the fear of God in them, The fear of authority in them, because they need that to function properly as human beings the rest of their lives. In faithfulness I tried to afflict them, to make them better, whenever they needed it.

**Let's pray...** Father, thank you tonight for your Word and we pray that you would help us. Lord, we saw earlier that bitterness begins as an unseen root, oh, we can look perfectly fine on the outside but on the inside is that root that springs up, troubles us and defiles others. Lord we see tonight that bitterness is a wasted emotion, teach us next what the solutions are from your Word that would remove all bitterness from your people. Help us not to fail of the grace of God, that our faith would not fail. Lord when we are hurt, help us not to bite the hand of the one who feeds us, our owner, the one who has been so good to us for so long. Lord, you sure have been good to us for a long time. Give us strength and grace in our times of need I pray, in Jesus Name and for His sake. Amen!

### **The Solutions For Dealing With Bitterness (Part III)**

**What are the solutions to bitterness?**

**1. One must admit that bitterness is a sin.** Admit that you have this problem.

But right here someone might say, "But Pastor, I was sexually abused and molested repeatedly for years. Why didn't that man stop, and why didn't God stop him?"

This subject of bitterness can go very deep. This is one, which people struggle with for a long time. It is absolutely horrible with what some people have done to others, but I still maintain that "TWO WRONGS NEVER MAKE A RIGHT."

It is absolutely wrong what some people have done to you in the past and it is absolutely wrong with what you have done to some people in the past.

That person continues to hurt you if you hate them. And you continue to be bonded to the person that hurt you by your hatred and your bitterness. The fact of the matter is that, that person is still the closest person to you. You are chained to that person in your emotion. In fact you probably think of them every day.

Therefore that person continues to hurt you, until you break that chain. If you hate somebody, you have unforgiveness toward somebody and have bitterness toward somebody, you are still emotionally chained to that person, and they continue to hurt you and keep you in bondage every day of your life.

Can I give you some good news? Jesus Christ came to set the captives free!

*John 8:36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*

What we need to realize is that bitterness is mentioned right along side of murder and the shedding of innocent blood.

*Rom 3:10-18 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: 11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. 12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofit-*

able; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. 13 Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: 14 Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: 15 Their feet are swift to shed blood: 16 Destruction and misery are in their ways: 17 And the way of peace have they not known: 18 There is no fear of God before their eyes.

You have got to understand that bitterness is a sin. It is not a justified emotion. It must be confessed.

## **2. Bitterness must be confessed and forsaken**

It sounds easy, but it is not, I know that.

*Ps 51:3 For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.*

*Ps 32:5 I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.*

When you confess it, he forgives you for it. I am not saying that it won't come back and revisit you. It will probably revisit you the next day!

The more you keep resisting that, your character then will become your nature to put up resistance.

In other words, if you say, "Here comes bitterness, I'm not going to have a part in it." And you do that day after day after day, then that becomes part of your nature and helps you build up a barrier to bitterness.

*James 4:7 Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

We are the resistance! We become freedom fighters! It needs to become our nature to resist these things. So, confess it and forsake it.

*Prov 28:13 He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.*

You are never going to prosper if you don't confess it and forsake it. If you just cover it up and pretend that it isn't there you will lose the battle.

I have never seen a bitter person prosper spiritually. They are stuck in the mire, stuck in a ditch, (A grave with the two ends kicked out!), you're dead.

Get out of there! Confess it and forsake it! It is a wasted emotion and a sinful one!

## **3. Let self die.**

*Rom 6:7 For he that is dead is freed from sin.*

Dead men don't sin! That doesn't mean go out and kill yourself.

*Rom 6:11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

There is no person who is going to give you more problems in this life than yourself.

Do you know who causes me the most trouble in life? It's myself! I am my own worst enemy. I have to tell myself when the old man starts arguing with the new man, "shut up, your suppose to be dead!" (And then he replies, If I'm dead, how come you're talking to me?)

*Gal 5:24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.*

When I get up every day, I'm going to say, Willie, I am not going to live for you today. I am not going to live for your will or for your wants or for your desires. I am going to give my life to Jesus Christ. I am going to live for him today and not myself! If I am dead I am freed from sin.

*Eph 4:31 Let all (That means there are many different kinds and causes of bitterness as we have already discussed) bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:*

Put it away from you. Put it away! Like putting your summer clothes in the attic, or the garbage out to the curb. Same thing with bitterness, just put it away and don't get it out again.

Can I encourage you to memorize these verses of scripture, word perfectly, Eph. 4: 31-32

I'm glad I'm forgiven today. Has anybody done anything worse to you than what we have done to Christ? Last I read, we had Christ crucified for our sins. My sins nailed Him to an old rugged cross and he never did anything wrong. My sins nailed a perfect man to a cross one day and made him suffer, bleed and die in my place, and he forgave me, like that! And just as soon as I asked him to.

#### **4. Give God a chance to speak.**

A lot of bitter people don't give God a chance to speak. They think God is guilty of some injustice. Somebody who is bitter at God, believes that God has made his first mistake.

God has never made a mistake. He is perfect.

If you believe that God has made his first mistake with you, then give God a chance to speak. In our country, when someone is arrested and thrown in jail, they are to be considered innocent until proven guilty. They have the opportunity to face their accuser. They have the right to their day in court. We allow them to speak on their behalf. We allow them to defend themselves.

Did you know that bitter people treat God less than human? They don't give God the chance to speak. They don't want to hear what the preacher has to say, what the Bible has to say, they don't want to read the Bible, they don't want to hear what any Christian has to say, they just want to be bitter at God!

Do you know that He may have some answers in this book? Do you remember when David tried to bring the Ark of God back to Jerusalem, and Uzzah touched the Ark and God killed him? After that took place, David was bitter and angry against God. But after some investigation, David came to the conclusion that he was wrong! He had looked into the law of God, and the law said that they were not to carry the Ark of God on a cart pulled by horses. We were supposed to have it covered. It was suppose to be lifted and carried by poles through the rings and bore on the shoulders of four sanctified Levites!

David said, we didn't do it God's way! Uzzah died because we didn't do it God's way! Now, let's go back and do it God's way. You see, David let God speak and he got over his bitterness.

David said, *Ps 119:11 Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*

This book is the answer book! It has the answers to our questions. It may take a long time to search out and find them, but eventually you will come to the conclusion and say, "Now I understand why God did that or allowed that to happen."

Matter of fact you will probably realize that God never wanted that to happen, that it was the actions of sinful man. (If someone breaks into my house and kills my wife or one of my children it is not God's fault, it is sinful mans fault.)

Give God a chance to speak.

#### **5. Keep your eye on the grace of God with diligence.**

*Heb 12:15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;*

He promises that His grace will be sufficient for anything that we have to face. It doesn't matter how great our hurt can be, God's grace is sufficient to sustain us through that hurt.

Read some books on the concentration camps and the atrocities that took place in Germany and you will be amazed at how God's grace sustained them through that. They ended up getting out of that and living very fruitful lives for God.

Read some of the autobiographies of some of the great missionaries, like Adoniram Judson, and what he endured to reach the Burmese people with the gospel and it will astound you concerning the grace of God that was able to sustain him.

Keep your eye on the grace of God and go get the grace of God when you need it in your lives.

*Heb 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

His grace is sufficient... Don't fail of the grace of God.

## **6. Hate the sin but love the sinner.**

A bitter person should hate the sin but love the sinner. This is how God treats us!

I know that some of you have been overpowered by sinful people in your life, especially vulnerable are the woman and young children. What we need to realize is this that the power of sin is greater than the power of the person who overpowered us.

*Rom 7:17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.*

*Rom 7:20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.*

That was Paul. Now he wasn't really passing the buck. He was saying, when he is carnal, unsaved and living in the flesh, that sin made him do things that he could not stop himself from doing. What did Paul do? He went about killing Christians! Overpowering them, breaking up homes, families, marriages, hauling them off to prison, torturing them, making them blaspheme God and consenting unto their death. Holding the coats of those who took up rocks and stoned the righteous Stephen to death, killing one of God's finest men!

Then he got saved! And reflecting back on it said, It wasn't me that did it, but sin that dwelleth in me. Sin overpowered me. There is not a person in this room who is a match over the power of sin. Neither you nor I can resist sin in our own flesh and get the victory. But God can help us!

The power of sin is greater than the power of man, but the power of God is greater than the power of sin. We need God's power in our lives if we are to ever stop sinning.

*Rom 7:5 For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.* (Sin always takes on motion and ran me over, and they hurt me and I hurt other people!) And just like other people I hope will forgive me, I need to forgive those who hurt me.

Hate the sin, but love the sinner!

## **7. Point them to Jesus for restoration.**

Whenever any counsel is done, the subject of Jesus Christ must always be brought up.

Don't you think that Jesus Christ had a right to be bitter? He didn't! He wasn't!

He said, *Luke 23:34 Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.*

It says in the Psalms... *Ps 23:3 He restoreth my soul:*

If you come to Jesus Christ, repent of your bitterness and receive Him as Lord and Savior of your life, the scripture says that Christ was sent to... *Luke 4:18 ... heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,*

He will not only heal your broken heart but will begin to restore and to rebuild your soul! And what the ravages of sin has ruined and what abusers and human beings have damaged and left your life shattered in pieces;

when you come to Christ he can begin to rebuild your life and completely heal you of your past and restore you as a great monument and a testimony to His grace.

Always point them to Jesus Christ! Tell them that the Lord hath need of you!

I feel like a million bucks today. Not because I slept well last night, but because I know that the Lord hath need of me, that He has something for me to do. That He has a plan and a purpose for my life! People need me, my family needs me, and my church needs me. My grandchildren are going to need me. I have got something to live for!

I'm a needed person! Talk about improving your self-esteem! Give your life to the Lord. Start getting involved in ministry and helping people, making a difference in their lives, and you will forget your past and feel like a million bucks!

We need to be focused on the present, and on your future with what you have to do for God and you will forget the past. I've got too much to do in life if the Lord tarries. I don't have time to be bitter. I'm not going to waste my emotion on that.