



Small Groups

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Uprooted – Part 1

Bitterness

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Main Idea – If you are planted in a good church, you are in a good place to grow to your potential as one of God's created. One of the things that will hurt your growth is bitterness. Do not allow bitterness to take root in the good soil in which you are planted.

Planted in a good environment

- As a Christian, you are called to bear good fruit (**Matthew 7: 17-20**).
- The productivity of a plant - or tree - depends on its environment. The necessary mix of air quality, soil nutrients, climate, moisture, etc. must be available for the plant to reach its potential.
- You, yourself, must make intentional decisions about your environment to ensure you are planted in a good place.
- If you are an active member in a good church, the chances are you are well-planted.
Psalm 1:3 – He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper. (NKJV)
- The Bible is a resource for helping you identify toxicity in your environment, as well as providing ways to remove that toxicity.

Bitterness is a toxin that will stunt your growth and productivity

- The Bible tells us to get rid of all bitterness in our lives. **Ephesians 4: 31-32 – Get rid of *all* bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (NIV)**
- A simple reality is that some individuals will rub you the wrong way. You are vulnerable to becoming easily offended by them, and you may tend to harbor resentment toward them.
- Even those types of personality conflicts should not be allowed into your life. You have the ability to remove from your mind negative ideas and images of vengeance.
- The circumstances associated with those individuals are tests for you to overcome so that bitterness does not harm your own life, growth, and potential.

Four types of people with whom you are likely to hold a grudge, the root causes of those grudges, and what the Bible says is the way to remove that bitterness

1. People with whom you don't "gel" well

- Sometimes it seems there is a type of negative chemical reaction between two individuals; without any good reasons, they just don't like each other.
- The Root Issue: an unwillingness to get out of comfort zones.
- Each of us is more comfortable in certain surroundings, with things with which we are familiar.
- What the Bible says: the Bible tells you to live at peace with other people to the full extent of your abilities. **Romans 12:18 – If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. (NIV)**

2. People who aren't in your tribe

- Jesus told his followers to "go the extra mile" with those who may be causing bitterness. Today, Jesus might tell you to engage with – and be kind to – those people who are different from you; those individuals with whom you would not normally like or associate with. Jesus might tell you to give extra service to someone who is not in your group.
- The Root Issue: ego / pride.
- When we are confronted by someone with whom we have little in common, it is easy to resist him or her because of our own pride.
- What the Bible says: the Bible tells you to at least double your involvement beyond what would seem required with those individuals. **Matthew 5:41 – And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. (ESV)**
- Jesus' teaching, in this case, was likely inspired by the Roman law that required individuals to serve a Roman soldier by carrying his gear for one mile if he asked (or told) them to do so.

3. People with whom we compare ourselves, or with whom we feel a need to compete

- From youth, most of us develop our own personal identities. Those identities are self-developed perceptions of our own worth or importance.
- Occasionally, you might meet someone who seems to threaten your self-perceived identity. In such cases you might become resentful of that person, even if s/he reflects truth.

- The Root Issue: a personal identity crisis.
- What the Bible says: The Old Testament tells the story of how King Saul became threatened by David, and became resentful when David appeared to receive greater acclaim. **1 Samuel 18: 6-9 – As they were coming home, when David returned from striking down the Philistine, the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, and songs of joy, and with musical instruments. And the women sang to one another as they celebrated, “Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands.”** And Saul was very angry, and this saying displeased him. He said, “They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed thousands, and what more can he have but the kingdom?” **And Saul eyed David from that day on.** (ESV)
- However, Saul had no good reason to feel threatened by David because Saul, himself, was a gifted and impressive individual. **1 Samuel 9: 1-2 – There was a wealthy, influential man named Kish from the tribe of Benjamin. He was the son of Abiel, son of Zeror, son of Becorath, son of Aphiah, of the tribe of Benjamin. His son Saul was the most handsome man in Israel – head and shoulders taller than anyone else in the land.** (NLT)
- You must see yourself as God sees you. Do not allow yourself to think in terms of a competition with someone else for attention or acclaim. Your personal identity should not depend on compliments, or the expressions of others.
- You won't see yourself as God sees you if your eyes are on someone else.

4. People who have hurt us

- Have you unintentionally hurt someone? Has someone hurt you – either intentionally or unintentionally?
- When you have been hurt, you tend to build up righteousness in your own mind by placing blame on someone else.
- The Root Issue: the fear of being hurt again.
- What the Bible says: You will lose a good relationship if you continually think about perceived insults or wrongdoing. **Proverbs 17:9 – Love prospers when a fault is forgiven, but dwelling on it separates close friends.** (NLT)
- Jesus said we are to use prayer as one means of forgiveness. Part of the Lord's Prayer is found in **Matthew 6: 11-12 – Give us today the food we need, and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us.** (NLT)
- Forgiveness means no longer holding someone else responsible for your feelings. Forgiveness should not require the expectation of an apology.
- Depending on the circumstances, it may be wise to forgive someone from a distance,

without direct interaction with the individual; especially, if the relationship is contentious.

Make a list and then pray

- The first step toward walking in forgiveness - and leaving bitterness behind - is making the decision that you actually want forgiveness to happen.
- You must work toward the place where you will have genuinely forgiven, and are not holding someone accountable for whatever she or he did.
- Make a list of individuals who have hurt you, or who annoy you, or of whom you have jealousy, or who have threatened your own self-perception.
- Pray blessings for each person on that list.
- **Luke 6:28-29 – Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you. If someone slaps you on one cheek, offer the other cheek also. If someone demands your coat, offer your shirt also.**

Reflective Questions for Uprooted – Part 1

1. Of the four types of people identified by Ryan Leak, is there one category of people that is most challenging for you right now?
2. How can the Bible verses associated with that category help you overcome that challenge? Do you know of any other verses that speak to the danger of harboring bitterness?
3. If the reason for removing bitterness from your mindset is to keep your environment uncontaminated by toxins, can you envision what your personal growth will be like free from any bitterness?