



KILLING WHAT'S KILLING YOU, PART 3:

All of us have the capacity to get angry. The bible doesn't prohibit anger—it's a very real emotion! But we have to learn to express anger in a healthy way, or it will lead to bitterness. And *there's no healthy expression for bitterness*. It's just toxic.

BIG IDEA: Bitterness is the result of unresolved, unforgiven anger and resentment built up over time.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

** Remember the goal is to use the questions to generate discussion, not to complete every one.*

1. Keeping it anonymous, do you know someone that might be described as a bitter person? Why would you describe them as bitter? How does their bitterness affect relationships?
2. *With the Bible or Bible App, [read Hebrews 12:15](#).*

¹⁵ Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many. [Hebrews 12:15 \(NLT\)](#)

3. How is bitterness like a root? What are some similarities with bitterness and the roots of a weed?
4. Is there any unresolved anger in your life that has allowed bitterness to take root? Share with your group.

Did you ever put white flowers into ink and watch their color change as the ink was absorbed up the stems and taken into the flowers themselves? Bitterness produces a poisonous fruit. As we store bitterness and hatred inside us, our lives start to reflect hatred, anger and rage. Our relationships are poisoned. It is hard to admit to being a bitter person, so we find reasons (or excuses) to justify our feelings. Here are five qualities of a bitter person:

- *Tend to justify their bitterness – I deserve to be angry after what they did to me.*
 - *Overly critical – You pick apart the person you are angry with.*
 - *Secretly celebrate the misfortunes of others.*
 - *Tend to write off entire groups of people – Hurt by one or two but mistrust the whole group.*
 - *Struggle to see the bitterness in themselves – Everyone else sees your bitterness but you don't.*
5. Do you identify with any of these qualities? Which of them do you struggle with the most? Why do you think that's so?
 6. Dave said, "Anger isn't wrong. It's an honest, healthy emotion. But unresolved anger allows the poison of what happened to you get into you. Bitterness is an emotional cancer."
 7. *With the Bible or Bible App, [read Matthew 16:21-25](#).*

²¹ From then on Jesus began to tell his disciples plainly that it was necessary for him to go to Jerusalem, and that he would suffer many terrible things at the hands of the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but on the third day he would be raised from the dead. ²² But Peter took him aside and began to reprimand him for saying such things. "Heaven forbid, Lord," he said. "This will never happen to you!" ²³ Jesus turned to Peter and said, "Get away from me, Satan! You are a dangerous trap to me. You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God's." ²⁴ Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you wants to be my

follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. ²⁵ If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it.

[Matthew 16:21-25 \(NLT\)](#)

8. Jesus teaches us how serious anger is. He also offers a description of anger that sheds light on the fact that when we get angry, we are looking at things through a limited perspective. God has a view of the circumstances of our lives that we don't have. How does this impact or change the way you think about anger?

MOVING FORWARD

How are things with your heart? Are you mad at anyone? An important part of getting rid of bitterness is to identify who you are bitter towards. Equally important is determining what it is exactly that this person owes you. Did he or she take away your childhood, the opportunity to put your kids to bed at night, your reputation, your income, or your marriage? What do they owe you?

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

If you've been hurt by someone in the past, make a list of the wrongs done to you and what you feel they owe you. Recognize that Christ died for this person's sins against you and extend to them the forgiveness that you have received from God. Write on the list, "Paid in Full" and then pick a day to put it behind you—bury it, burn it, or whatever will bring closure. You will be tempted to mentally dig it up again, but don't. Remind yourself that it is in your past. Whenever this past incident comes to mind, agree with God that this sin has been paid for by Christ and that you, too, have forgiven them.

CHANGING YOUR MIND

Make every effort to live in peace with all men. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

Hebrews 12:14-15