

C¹ onechurch

bigIdea

BIG IDEA: Forgiveness uproots bitterness.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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. Read Hebrews 12:15-15. How is bitterness like a root? What are some similarities with bitterness and roots of weeds?

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.*
3. Do you identify with any of these qualities? Which of them do you struggle with the most? Why do you think that's so?
 4. Read Matthew 5:43-48. How did Jesus say we ought to treat our enemies? What did Jesus say we ought to do for those who persecute us?
 5. Read Matthew 5:46. What type of people did Jesus say who, "Loves those who love them?"
 6. What would have to happen in your heart in order for you to be able to pray for an enemy?
 7. In what ways does a loving spirit demonstrate that we are God's people? For which of your 'enemies' will you pray every day this week?
 8. Read Ephesians 4:31-32. How is forgiveness the key to getting rid of bitterness?
 9. What keeps us from forgiving others?
 10. How does it change your perspective when you focus on how God has forgiven you?

THINK ABOUT IT

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 12:14a-15