

# EPHESIANS

## Rooting Out Bitterness

Main Scripture: Ephesians 4:30-32  
Hebrews 12:15

**Get rid of bitterness. (v 31)**

**Embrace forgiveness. (v 32)**  
(Mk 11:25-26)

**Be kind and compassionate. (v 32)**  
(Phil 2:13, Lk 6:27)

# Heartland Kids Weekend Bulletin

March 20/21, 2021

## Ephesians 4:30-32

*<sup>30</sup>... do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup> Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. <sup>32</sup> Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*



### Get rid of bitterness

- Have you ever been bitter? Bitterness is when we give ourselves reasons that we should stay angry at someone or something. We tell ourselves we can stay mad because we are right!
- God tells us to get rid of bitterness because it can cause us lots of damage. When we're bitter, our hearts are closed and we can't love our friends and family the way God would.

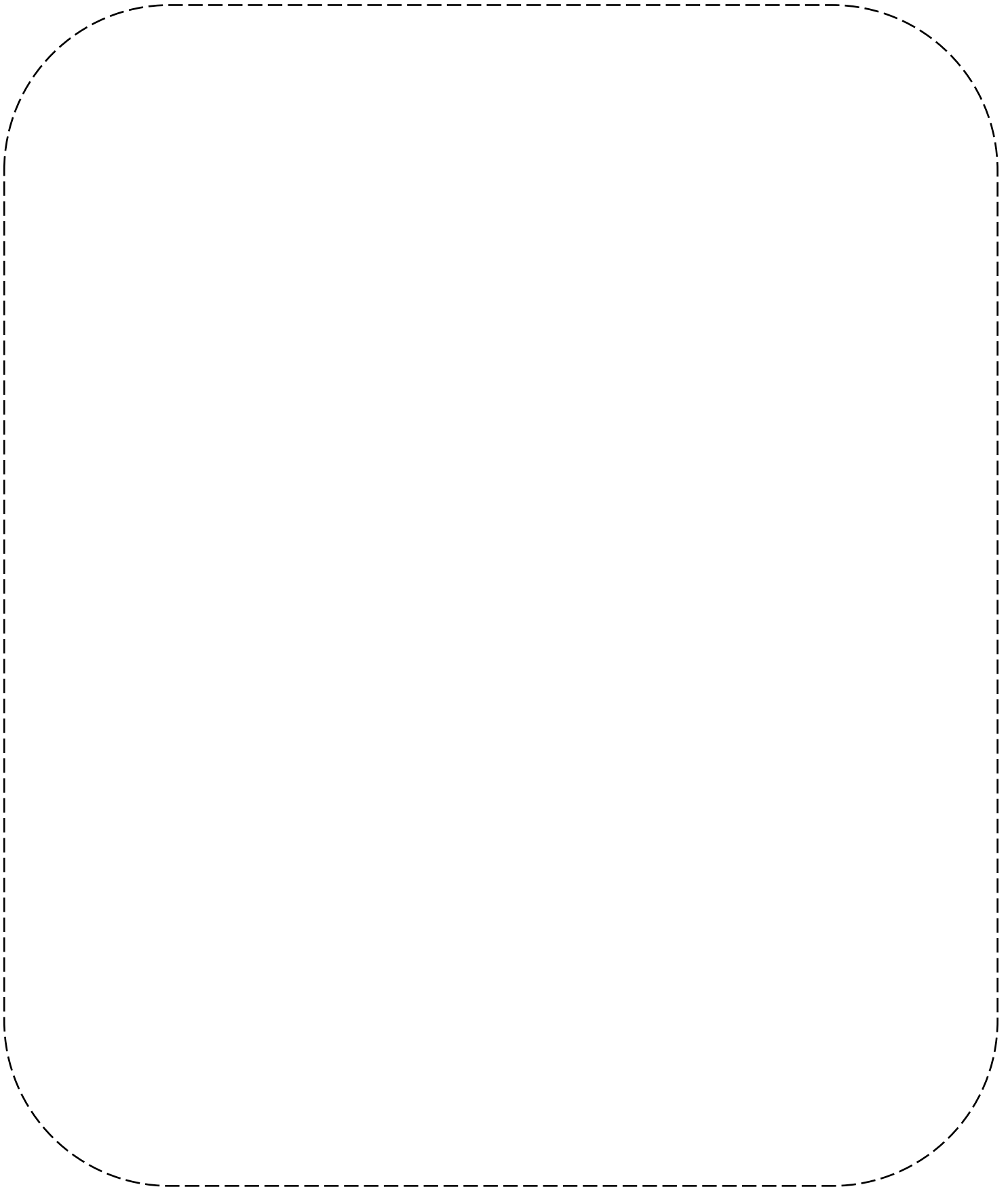
### Embrace forgiveness

- The Bible tells us that forgiveness isn't optional. That means we don't get to decide "if" we will forgive someone, only "when." Just like God is always ready to forgive us, He wants us to be ready to forgive others.
- The first step to forgiving other people and letting go of our bitterness is prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to help us. He loves that!

### Be kind and compassionate

- Once we have let go of our bitterness and embraced forgiveness, the next step is living a kind and compassionate life.
- Go to the Family Challenge page for some questions to help you learn if bitterness is part of your life and to see what steps to take to lead a compassionate life.

Draw a picture of what you learned today.



# Family Challenge

Are you bitter? This week, Pastor Al gave us four questions to ask ourselves to help us find out. They are listed below. Read and discuss them as a family. Once you've finished that and are ready (maybe another time in the week), go through the five steps of leading a compassionate life.

## Bitterness Questions:

1. **Do I have a habit of replaying old tapes in my head?** "Old tapes" here means that you remember what happened and go through what was said, what people did and how they acted over and over again.
2. **Is my mouth out of control?** Are you snarky, snappy or rude to your friends or family?
3. **Am I constantly sick for no apparent reason?** Your mental health affects your physical body! Take a look at the last few weeks or months of your life. Have you had headaches, upset stomach or fatigue?
4. **Are the people I spend time with bitter?** This might be a hard question to answer as a family. Be loving, open and honest with each other. If someone says yes to this question, take some time to pray before you answer and get into a discussion.

Good job! Bitterness can be a tough thing to talk about. Enjoy some time together doing something fun or relaxing to help everyone destress.

## Steps to Compassion:

1. **Show compassion towards yourself and forgive.** How can you show compassion and forgive others if you can't do those things for yourself?
2. **Ask the Holy Spirit to help you and to soften your heart.** Like Pastor Al mentioned, forgiveness isn't a choice for people who follow God. We won't always feel like forgiving other people. That is why praying and asking for help is so important!
3. **Start praying for the person towards whom you are bitter.** This can be a really hard step! But when we work on praying for people we don't feel like loving, God has a cool way of showing His heart for that person and our bitterness goes away even faster.
4. **Demonstrate your love for them in a practical way.** This can be anything you want it to be – giving a gift, saying something kind, doing a chore for someone. The choice is yours.
5. **Have the courage to forgive yourself.** You might feel regret after you see how nice it is to forgive and not be bitter. Remember to be kind to yourself too. Part of that is forgiving yourself for making poor choices in the past and letting God help you move forward.

# How Bitterness Builds

This week you can do a cool experiment to see how bitterness can build up in your heart. Here is a list of what you'll need.

1. Sandwich bag (any size)
2. Vinegar
3. Warm water
4. Measuring cups
5. Baking soda
6. Facial tissue (Kleenex)
7. Safety goggles (optional)

In this experiment, the sandwich bag will represent us, our hearts and our feelings. The vinegar is something that makes us feel sad or upset. The baking soda is our bitterness – when we choose not to ask God to help us forgive someone. Follow the steps below to see what happens when we hold on to bitterness. (Note to adults: it may be better to do this experiment outside to avoid a messy clean-up.)

1. Add 1/4 cup warm water to a sandwich bag.
2. Add 1/2 cup of vinegar to the same bag.
3. Measure out 3 tsp of baking soda and dump that in the center of a tissue.
4. Fold up the tissue around the baking soda.
5. Have kids use safety goggles if you are concerned about the next step.
6. Working quickly, drop the folded tissue into the bag and close it completely.
7. Step back.
8. If the reaction doesn't happen quickly, shake the bag to agitate and start the chemical reaction.

What happened to the bag once the baking soda and vinegar mixed? It expanded and maybe even exploded! The bag was even a little dangerous to be around, right? When we hold on to bitterness we become like that bag. People get nervous to see or speak to us. That isn't what God wants! He wants us to love and be loving to other people.

Have fun with your bitterness bags! Take a photo or video and tag us on social media.

# “Rooting Out Bitterness” | March 20 & 21, 2021

The Small Group Sermon Study  
Ephesians 4:30-32



**Opening Prayer: Father, in Jesus’ name, through the Holy Spirit, come and speak to us, teach us and transform us as we read, discuss and reflect on Your word.**

1. Big Picture: What did you like or appreciate about this message? What challenged you in this message?
2. Read the key passage(s) of Scripture from the message and review the points from the sermon notes, then answer the following questions:
  - a. What does this tell us about God (Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit)? Why does He care about our bitterness?
  - b. How does bitterness affect our Christian life?
  - c. What are some of the barriers we face in getting rid of bitterness?
  - d. What are some ways we as a small group can help each other overcome these barriers?
3. What don’t you understand or what other questions does this passage make you ponder?

***Silently re-read the key Scripture(s) from the message, asking the Holy Spirit to speak to you.***

4. What emotions does this passage or the key theme stir up in you?
5. Is there anywhere in your life right now that bitterness has taken root? Is there anyone you need to forgive (maybe even yourself) that the Holy Spirit is identifying for you right now?

Prayer: This week, maybe consider placing a chair in the middle of the room, and invite whomever wants to, to take turns sitting in the chair. Ask that person to share what the Holy Spirit is showing them personally; then, have everyone else gather around and (with their permission) lay hands on them and pray for them.