

How To Deal With Bitterness

Series: How God Changes Our Attitudes

Have you ever been bitter?

All bitterness starts out as hurt.

If not taken care of, your hurt will become hate.

What Does The Bible Say?

Tax collectors and other notorious sinners often came to listen to Jesus teach. 2 This made the Pharisees and teachers of religious law complain that he was associating with such sinful people—even eating with them!

3 So Jesus told them this story... (Luke 15:1-3 NLT)

Do you intentionally hang out with what society calls outcasts?

How about starting with the black sheep in your family?

The older brother ties back to the Pharisees and teachers of religious law.

21 His son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.’ 22 “But his father said to the servants, ‘Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. 23 And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, 24 for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.’ So the party began. (Luke 15:21–24 NLT)

It is always a party when someone comes home. Enjoy the party!

28 “The older brother was angry and wouldn’t go in. His father came out and begged him, 29 but he replied, ‘All these years I’ve slaved for you and never once refused to do a single thing you told me to. And in all that time you never gave me even one

young goat for a feast with my friends. 30 Yet when this son of yours comes back after squandering your money on prostitutes, you celebrate by killing the fattened calf!’ (Luke 15:28–30 NLT)

Bitterness thrives on pity, especially when the story you tell yourself is inflated.

The older brother ties back to the Pharisees and teachers of religious law.

How Can You Obey?

31 “His father said to him, ‘Look, dear son, you have always stayed by me, and everything I have is yours. 32 We had to celebrate this happy day. For your brother was dead and has come back to life! He was lost, but now he is found!’ ” (Luke 15:31–32 NLT)

Remember what you have.

Steps to get rid of bitterness

- 1. Talk to God, He wants to talk to you.**
- 2. Learn to tell your story honestly.**
- 3. Write a letter to the person that you feel hurt you. Explain your feelings.**
- 4. Then don't send the letter!**
- 5. Start to forgive. Forgiveness alone enables you to let go of grievances, grudges, bitterness, and resentment.**
- 6. If bitter, resentful feelings remain, return to Step 1 and begin again.**

You always suffer when you are bitter.

Additional Notes:

If you would like to use your home to disciple others, check out our training at www.crosswaveschurch.com/host. Cross Waves

has produced short videos to train you how to use your home to reach others for Christ. So please check it out.

Explore:

Today's Bible and Science segment comes from the book Wallace, J. W. (2017). Forensic faith: a homicide detective makes the case for a more reasonable, evidential christian faith. Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook.

Explore:

Appears that both sons spent time in the pigpen. One in the pen of rebellion—the other in the pen of self-pity. The younger one has come home. The older one hasn't. He's still in the slop. He is saying the same thing you said when the kid down the street got a bicycle and you didn't. It's not fair!

Lucado, M. (1999). He still moves stones. Nashville: Word Pub.

Explore:

The young son had been far from the father (in a distant country) because of sins of passion. But the elder son was separated from his father through sins of attitude. He was even farther away than his younger brother and he had not even left the farm!

Hughes, R. K. (1998). Luke: that you may know the truth (p. 144). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

Explore:

We must admit that the elder brother had some virtues that are commendable. He worked hard and always obeyed his father. He never brought disgrace either to the home or to the village, and apparently he had enough friends so that he could have planned an enjoyable party (Luke 15:29). He seems like a good solid citizen and, compared to his younger brother, almost a saint.

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). The Bible exposition commentary (Vol. 1, p. 236). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Explore:

When you examine the sins of the elder brother, you can easily understand why he pictures the scribes and Pharisees. To begin with, he was self-righteous. He openly announced the sins of his brother, but he could not see his own sins (see Luke 18:9–14).

The Pharisees defined sin primarily in terms of outward actions, not inward attitudes. They completely missed the message of the Sermon on the Mount and its emphasis on inward attitudes and holiness of heart (Matt. 5–7).

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). The Bible exposition commentary (Vol. 1, p. 236). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Explore:

The book *How To Beat Burnout* suggests that bitterness is “a hidden root of burnout,” and isolates five reasons why people tend to grow bitter:

1. Wrong motives or jealousy. In counseling Christians, we frequently see bitterness associated with jealousy. The examples include successful attorneys who envy the abilities of their colleagues, Bible college and seminary students consumed with jealousy toward fellow students ... pastors or missionaries envious of others who have seen more outward evidences of success.

2. Wrong response to irritations; conditional love. In Colossians 3:19 Paul instructs husbands to “love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.” The Greek word *pikroi* used here (for the word bitter) demonstrates “resentment or an incensed and angry attitude of mind.” Conditional love produces harshness and

bitterness both in husbands and wives frequently, that can lead to marital burnout.

3. Wrong response to adversity. In Hebrews 12:15, we discover a warning against “any root of bitterness springing up,” instead of enduring hardship as a discipline.

4. Misplaced strife. We have seen churches that have been crippled in their effectiveness for years because of bitter envying and strife on the part of church leaders.

5. An unforgiving spirit. Ephesians 4:31–32 draws a clear connection between bitterness and what is perhaps its most basic underlying cause, a refusal to forgive. “Let all bitterness be put away from you ... Be kind to one another ... forgiving one another....”

Morgan, R. J. (2000). *Nelson’s complete book of stories, illustrations, and quotes* (electronic ed., p. 69). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Explore:

In the New Testament, the “gall of bitterness” (Acts 8:23, KJV) describes a spiritual poisoning—a heart of great wickedness—in Simon the sorcerer. A “root of bitterness” (Heb. 12:15) is a wicked person or a sin that leads to denial of the faith.

Youngblood, R. F., Bruce, F. F., & Harrison, R. K., Thomas Nelson Publishers (Eds.). (1995). In Nelson’s new illustrated Bible dictionary. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc.

Explore:

Jealousy always involves three persons: self, a loved one, and a rival. Feelings of fear arise in the self when there is a threatened (real or imagined) loss of the affection of the loved one.

“Jealousy is never wholly rational” (Cameron, 1963, p. 490).

Fear can be accompanied by hostility toward the rival, and both

are often intense emotions because the threatened loss strikes at one's self-esteem and narcissism.

Beck, J. R. (1999). Jealousy. In D. G. Benner & P. C. Hill (Eds.), Baker encyclopedia of psychology & counseling (2nd ed., p. 654). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Question 1 of 5

Why did Jesus hang out with sinners?

Question 2 of 5

Who do you know that needs a friend? How will you reach out to them?

Question 3 of 5

Why do you think the father initiated the contact with the older son? In what ways is this like our heavenly Father?

Question 4 of 5

What are the steps to overcome bitterness?

Question 5 of 5

Why is forgiveness the antidote for bitterness?