

MONSTERS

Study Guide

BITTERNESS

It usually starts out like a hurt feeling. We may not want to call it that. But most emotional pain comes from a feeling of entitlement. We have had something done to us that we didn't deserve or we didn't appreciate and even if we're right, our anger begins to build because of the injustice we feel over this hurt. How could they do that? Why would they say that? Do they not care enough about me to think about how I feel or how that would affect me. It starts with a hurt feeling and can quickly turn into anger.

Anger looks like a cold answer, a distant attitude or sometimes all our yelling and screaming. It feels justified. It feels right. We know we were wronged and we want that to be made right. The longer others take to make it right the anger we get and the more justified we feel in that anger. As time progresses we sleep on it. The immediateness of it subsides yet the anger is still there. You can go a little while without thinking about it but then something triggers it. Your mind wanders for a moment, things slow down, and you're back to thinking about that person, what they did, and how they hurt you. The anger that seemed to pass is rekindled and it's almost as if we're reliving the moment all over again. We feel the hurt and the pain like it just happened. Time may have passed, others may have moved on, but the wound is fresh for you.

Before you know it, a much larger time has passed and the pain is further and fewer between but nonetheless it's still there. And while you may not be living in pain all the time there is a constant reminder, a thorn in the flesh one might say that is constantly reminding you of the hurt. It's a constant draw back to what people can do, how people can treat you, or the injustice you faced and don't want to cage again. You grow colder to people. You're hurting and they don't seem to be. Are they better than you? Are they blissfully ignorant? Happy people annoy you because they clearly don't know the underbelly of this life yet and when they do they'll be just as cynical as you. Pain turned to anger, to bitterness, to arrogance, to pride, to resentment.

When you stop and look back at who you were, before the hurt, you don't recognize that person anymore. That person doesn't exist anymore.

This week we're going to look at bitterness. Bitterness is the monster that not only scares us but eventually ends up changing us.

“Bitterness is like drinking poison in hopes that someone else will die.”

Romans 12:17-21

Let go of you hurt and forgive as an example (17-18)

Do not be like them, show them honor.

Repay evil with good.

Aim for peace with everyone.

Trust God to deal justly and handle your hurt. (19)

Holding onto vengeance is sin.

There is freedom in letting God worry about this.

Isaiah 1:18 Sins red like scarlet made white as snow.

Matthew 8:21-35 - Parable of the unforgiving servant.

In the shadow of my hurt, forgiveness feels like a decision to reward my enemy. But in the shadow of the cross, forgiveness is merely a gift from one undeserving soul to another.

Andy Stanley

Overcome evil with good (20-21)

Seek to do good, no matter who it is.

Galatians 5:13-14 -use your gift to serve, love your neighbor.

We don't overcome evil by hiding.

"The voice of sin is loud, but the voice of forgiveness is louder." D.L. Moody

Conclusion

May you let go of your debts to live a life of overflowing LOVE.

Reading Plan

Date	Verse	Gospel text	Psalms
Monday	Ephesians 4:32	John 5:18	Psalms 15
Tuesday	Luke 6:37	John 5:19-29	Psalms 16
Wednesday	Colossians 3:13	John 5:30-47	Psalms 17
Thursday	1 Peter 3:9	John 6:1-15	Psalms 18
Friday	Proverbs 15:1	John 6:16-21	Psalms 19
Saturday	Matthew 6:12	John 6:22-59	Psalms 20
Sunday	Hebrews 12:15a	John 6:60-71	Psalms 21

Community Group Questions

Read Romans 12:17-21

As Paul describes in this chapter the characteristics or demeanor of a true believer, he lists a number of characteristics that start well before vs 17. Why do you think it's so important for Paul to not only encourage the church to be true believers, but also to describe in such detail some of the traits of a true believer?

Paul says that we should not repay evil for evil, but instead we should look to do the honorable thing. What do you think is the priority difference between focusing on repaying evil and doing the honorable thing?

We're also called to live peacefully with others if at all possible on our side. What might make this command difficult to follow? How do you know when you've actually done everything you can to live peacefully? Is there a point when you just cannot? What does that look like?

Paul tells the church never to avenge themselves. Vengeance is God's. What does it look like to surrender vengeance to God? Can we still harbor bitterness if we've surrendered our vengeance to him?

Lastly, Paul tells the church that we should not just bear with evil but instead we should overcome it. Our good should overcome the evil around us? What does this look like in our life? How can our good overcome the bitterness we may face?

Write your thoughts and reflections on the passage below in the space provided.

Ephesians 4:21

Hebrews 12:14-15

Matthew 6:14-15

Proverbs 17:25

Colossians 3:8

Ephesians 4:32

Ecclesiastes 7:9

