

BITTER OR BETTER?

How many of you have ever been wronged? You were really wronged.
How many of you have every been treated unfairly? You were really treated unfairly.
How many of you have had something said about you
that is so untrue and so unfounded?

Most of you probably got angry or upset, some of you were devastated.
Anger is going to be a natural response to suffering and shameful circumstances.
Being betrayed, taken advantage of, and injustice are causes for anger but
as children of God we can be angry but we're not to let bitterness build and resentment rule

Tell me what you think?
Will this soldier be bitter or better?

The soldier received a dear John letter while overseas.
His girl friend said she was breaking up with him and would he please send her picture back.
She wanted it for her bridal announcement.

The soldier was very upset. He put her picture along with the pictures of about 20 others girls.
He sent this note with the pictures,
"Please take your picture and send back the rest,
for the life of me I don't remember which one is yours."

OK...Bitter or Better? Raise your hands...
How many say this will make the soldier Better? How many vote for Bitter?
He might of felt better for a while, but really better?

LET'LIST THE BY-PRODUCTS OF BITTERNESS OR THE RESULTS OF RESENTMENT

Make two fists, (one, if you only have one)
Squeeze as hard as you can.
Come on, tighter...tighter...
Hold that for a while...hold it...hold it...tighter

Ok, now let go...Notice these things

1-BITTERNESS MAKES *LIFE* MORE PAINFUL

Holding your fist tighter and tighter becomes painful. The longer and tighter, then the more painful.
So too we know that hanging on to a grudge is painful, The longer we hang on the more painful.

2-BITTERNESS MAKES *LETTING GO* MORE PAINFUL

So too letting go of the grudge will be painful too.
Did anyone want to let go? Sure you did? This is a dumb thing to do in church anyway.
Why didn't you let go?
For some of you it would be because you didn't want to be a quitter.
Quitting revenge is painful because you have to give up, give up your need for revenge.
Thus, bitterness creates a bind, being bitter and letting go of the bitterness is painful.

3-BITTERNESS MAKES US LESS PRODUCTIVE

It took more and more energy each second you tightened your fist, didn't it?
When we carry a grudge we use up more and more energy and so what happens,
it leaves less energy for everything else, and we lose our focus. I'll bet you had
to tried harder and harder to concentrate, to focus on making your hand a fist.
So too when we're bitter. It makes it more difficult to focus on other things.

4-BITTERNESS MAKES IT MORE DIFFICULT TO SERVE OTHERS

With your hand in the shape of a fist it's more difficult to do things for your self
or others, it's more difficult to create, to hold, to shape, and to mold.
When you have your hand open, you can make and bake things, you can shake hand,
give high five's, jug and hold people.

5-BITTERNESS MAKES US INSENSITIVE TO THE NEEDS OF OTHERS

Did you experience a tingling and then a numbness? When we're bitter,
we lose touch with others, we become numb to their needs, insensitive to their needs

Psalm 73.21-22 tells us even more, *"When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered,
I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you."*

6. BITERNESS MAKES US SENSELESS AND IGNORANT

Bitterness will keep us from thinking straight,
We know that the more emotional we are about something,
The less able we are to think through it, and when we don't we think through it,
we don't think straight, we do self-destructive, self-defeating things, and

7. BITTERNESS MAKE US A "BRUTE BEAST".

Once upon a time there were two brothers. The younger brother hated the older brother.
He became the Bitter Brother. What did the older brother do? Who knows?
Well, Bitter Brother knows and remembers with a vengeance.
He remembers and wants revenge.

And Bitter Brother can't let it go. He is out to settle the score...
But his revenge gives him no rest, only resentment more.
His pain creates not peace, it just brews more poison for...
more bitterness. There was simply no resolution for his resentment.

The Lord had mercy for the Bitter Brother. He sent an angel to the Bitter Brother.
The angel said, "The Lord has chosen for you to receive a great gift."

Just ask for riches, a long healthy life, successful children, or whatever...
But there is one stipulation because God wants to teach you a lesson,
Whatever you get, your brother will get twice as much.
If you ask for a \$1million, your brother will receive \$2million.
If you ask to be famous, your brother will be twice as famous.
The Bitter Brother thought for a moment, "You will give me anything I ask?"
The angel said, "Yes." And Bitter Brother smiled and said, "Strike me blind in one eye."

Now that is an ugly story isn't it? BITTERNESS is an ugly and destructive emotion.

Let's add more to our list of by-products of bitterness.

8- BITTERNESS KILLS

Job 5.2 says, "*Resentment kills a fool and envy slays the simple.*"

A Chinese Proverbs concurs, "Whoever opts for revenge should dig two graves."

9-BITTERNESS MAKES US MISS THE GRACE OF GOD

Hebrews 12.15 says, "*See to it that no one misses the grace of God*

and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many."

"...Missing God's grace." The Bitter Brother won't get a glimpse of God.

In the Message Bible Hebrews 12.15 goes like this,

"Keep a sharp eye out for weeds of discontent.

A thistle or two gone to seed can ruin a whole garden in no time."

So bitterness ruins relationships and it ruins life. The bitter root grows and finds a way to cut, to cut into others and to cut off oneself from God's grace.

WHAT IS THE PRESCRIPTION FOR HEALING AND HAPPINESS?

Here's Paul's in Ephesians 4.31-32. Note bitterness is listed first,

"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander

be put away from you along with all malice.

and be kind to one another, tender-hearted,

forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

Ah, let's try **FORGIVENESS**...WHY FORGIVENESS?

Well, what do a quick summary of the scriptures and life's circumstances tell us.

1-They tell us that BITTERNESS DOESN'T WORK. Bitterness creates trouble, kills, defiles...and just plain doesn't work. We've list a handful of reasons...actually two handfuls.

2-They tell us that GOD HAS ALREADY FORGIVEN YOU.

The first words of Jesus on the cross were, "*Father forgive them, they know not what do.*" Luke 23.44

"Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you." Colossians 3.13

"Forgive each other just as God in Christ forgave you." Ephesians 4.32

3-They tell us that YOU WILL NEED MORE FORGIVENESS IN THE FUTURE

Considers Paul riddle in Romans. 7.15-16

"I know what I should do, that I do not do and I know what I shouldn't do and that is what I do."

4-They tell us that GOD SAYS IT IS GOOD FOR YOU TO FORGIVE.

We actually pray this don't we, "*forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors...*"

Forgiveness is actually the floodgate for more forgiveness and healing.

WHICH IS IT? to stay BITTER? or get BETTER?

Now when the doctor prescribes a pill for you,
you have to take it to get better-Right
Or if the doctor prescribes a treatment,
you have to do what he/she says...Right?

And like some medicines, forgiveness is not an easy pill to swallow.
And like some treatments they are painful to follow.

Sometimes it's just plain painful, other time it makes more painful
Because of the way we think about the medication or the treatment.

That is why I think forgiveness is even more difficult.
It is more painful because OF THE WAY WE THINK OF FORGIVENESS.

1-Forgiveness painful because we think we are **GIVING UP** our right to get even.
Forgiveness is **NOT GIVING UP**; it is **GIVING IT TO GOD**.
Can you really do that? give it to God...yes, only with the help of God.

2-Forgiveness is painful because we think we're saying **WHAT WAS DONE WAS OK..**
Forgiveness is **NOT SAYING WHAT WAS DONE WAS OK**
Someone did something wrong. They are responsible, they are too blame.

Janie has some new crayons,
Susie borrows them and intentionally breaks them.
Janie is naturally upset and starts to cry. She curses Susie.
The teacher comes over and asked what happened. They explain.
The teacher eventually says, "Susie, give Janie back her crayons and say you're sorry."
And then says, "Janie tell her you forgive her... and say **IT'S OK.**"

IS IT OK? Is it ok that you have experienced horrible things in your life?

So horrible some of you can hardly talk about them, the pain is too great.
That experienced shaped your whole life and maybe not for the better.

WAS THAT OK what happened to you? **NO, IT WASN'T OK!**

So, can you still forgive and not say it was ok? Yes, you still need to forgive.

You do not want to stay the victim. Yes, you can forgive, by the **GRACE OF GOD.**

3-Forgiveness is painful because we are suppose **TO FORGIVE AND FORGET**...right?
Forgiveness is **NOT ABOUT FORGETTING...IT IS ABOUT FORGIVING.**
We can remember and still forgive.

Forgetting deals with the memory...forgiveness deals with pain of memory.
Some folks think that if you remember anything, then you haven't forgiven.
What forgiving really means is that you don't still hold a grudge about being wronged?
Forgiveness does not necessarily depend on whether or not you have forgotten.

When you delete a document from your computer.
It is in the computer's waste basket-Right?
But it is still in the computer.
You have simply chosen not to bring it up again.

FORGIVENESS IS NOT BRINGING UP THE PAIN AGAIN.

4-Forgiveness is painful because it means we have to **START** where we left off.
No, it means we **START OVER**...the relationship starts over...
or at least we start in a different place...there are new rules...
We learn and earn trust, otherwise all the pain will be wasted.

Does Janie have to let Susie use her crayons again.
Not necessarily...perhaps at some point in time.

We can forgive, we must forgive
the perpetrator or pedophile, murder or molester, abuser or antagonist
But can we trust them?
The issue moves from a matter of forgiveness to a matter of trust.

Should we put a pedophile unsupervised in a classroom of children?
Should we put the murderer back on the streets?
Should we put the abuser back in the home without a new set of guidelines?

I think you would say NO. But can you still forgive? YES

FORGIVENESS IS NOT ABOUT GIVING UP...IT IS GIVING TO GOD.
FORGIVENESS IS NOT ABOUT SAY IT IS OK...IT WAS NOT OK.
FORGIVENESS IS NOT ABOUT FORGETTING...IT IS ABOUT FORGIVING
FORGIVENESS IS NOT ABOUT STARTING WHERE YOU LEFT OFF...
IT IS ABOUT STARTING OVER

FORGIVENESS is your exit from the bondage of bitterness
and the entrance to fields of freedom.

WHICH WILL IT BE? BITTER? OR BETTER?

Opt for FORGIVENESS, it's BETTER
I think you'll be glad you did, I know others will be glad, and God too.

PRAYER

HYMN-Amazing Grace

