

A portrait of a man with short dark hair, looking off to the right. He is wearing a blue button-down shirt with small white dots and a dark jacket. The background is dark and out of focus.

**THE
BATTLE
WITH**

Bitterness

Session 1: The Seeds and Roots

Hebrews 12:15

No one wonders how the weed got there, or how it started. It didn't just appear as something big and conspicuous. Bitterness begins as a seed. If it takes root, it will bear fruit. Bitterness is an invasive species. Once it grows, it begins to dominate the garden. In this series we will look at the causes, formation, and result of bitterness and how to approach it in a Christian walk.

1. Why is bitterness such a big deal?
2. What does bitterness look like in your life?
3. How can we be proactive in stopping seeds of bitterness from taking root in our hearts?

Every life will come into contact with seeds of bitterness. Bitterness will quickly take control of our thoughts and attitudes, and cripple our ability to have healthy relationships. It is our responsibility to ensure those seeds do not take root. Through proactive prayer, self-reflection, and lifestyle choices, we can circumvent bitterness' most destructive elements.

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Session 2: The Fruit of Bitterness

II Samuel 16:23, 17:23

Unforgiveness grows into bitterness. The things we hold onto are not harmless. What we carry with us on our journey will shape that journey. The fruit of bitterness can be lethal. In this session, we will look at the devastating effects of bitterness and how to recognize its effects in us.

1. How does unforgiveness affect us?
2. How has bitterness impacted your decisions or attitudes?
3. What characteristics do you see in people controlled by bitterness, and how can we better identify and avoid them?

The fruit of bitterness often reveals itself in burgeoning hatred and vengeful action. No matter how much we can legitimately justify the bitterness we have, all bitterness is poison to our souls. By being mindful of the signs of bitterness taking root and bearing fruit, we can address the issue early on before it causes long-term harm to yourself and others.

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Session 3: Forget and Forgive

Hebrews 12:15

The saying “forgive and forget” is a beautiful sentiment, but it rarely makes sense to one walking through the valley of bitterness and betrayal. For those who find themselves here, there seems to be no way to forgive and an even narrower chance to forget. In this session, we will look at how forgetting past grievances can happen realistically and what the road ahead looks like.

1. In referencing bitterness, what can it mean to forget?
2. For those struggling to forget, what steps can be taken to help us move into the future?
3. How do we reconcile the bad things that happen to us with the person God wants us to be?

The past cannot change. All the betrayal and pain is real, but if we have learned anything from a graceful God, it is that our past does not have to dictate our future. God is calling us to be fruitful despite the bad roots we may be holding onto. We may never completely forget, but God can help us live new life as if we did.

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Session 4: The Simple Answer

I Samuel 1:10

The best possible news is that bitterness does not automatically disconnect you from God. Bitterness can bully us into staying silent, but the simple answer is to lift our eyes and open our mouth to speak to the God above who experienced the same things we did.

1. How does staying silent about bitterness in our prayer life hurt us?
2. What can we do to overcome the urge to stay silent about our past hurts?
3. How does us dying out to bitterness parallel God's forgiveness and sacrifice?

If all we have left is bitterness and prayer time, we can make it. For in our times of great distress, when we feel eaten alive by bitterness, the first step is just a prayer away. This God we serve endured the most unjustified grievances and most appalling betrayals, but He still died for us. How can we do any less? For us to be free of bitterness, we must realize that the burden of action does not fall on the one who hurt us, but on us. An apology is nice, but forgiveness is what will bring us life, even through the death of ourselves. How we decide to handle bitterness will forever impact our lives and the lives of our family and friends. Let us ask God to forgive our unforgiveness, teach us to die to ourselves as He did, and walk with newness of life into the favored future He has in store for us.

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