

# Bitter Or Better?

Bitter. Just say the word out loud. **BITTER**. Sounds pretty yucky doesn't it?

Life happens. Life can hurt. All of us have been wounded or burned by someone, disappointed, let down, offended, ripped off or betrayed—you get the picture. When things go wrong, and they will, we are tempted to become bitter over something or someone.

*In essence, bitter means to prick or cut. It means we are cut to the quick in our heart by someone or some action.* In Matthew 18:7 Jesus teaches that offenses (stumbling blocks) will come in life. We can't live life without being or offended at some time. Then Jesus gives a word of stern warning. The Lord says "*but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block (offense) comes!*" Offense is bad enough. But God is not pleased at all with those who cause offense. Offenders are not high on God's happy list.

Hurt and pain opens a door to our heart in which bitterness would storm its way in. Bitter spirits like to take root in the soil of our wounded hearts. Offense turns into ugly emotions like resentment, hatred, malice and bitterness toward the offender.

When the bitterness process begins, we have to watch out for "a root of bitterness" planting itself in our heart. Hebrews 12:15 lovingly warns and instructs "*See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled.*"

**God loves us and is serious about His children not becoming bitter.** The Hebrew writer notes the following things about bitterness.

1. *Bitterness will cause us to fall short of God's grace.* We cut ourselves off from God's grace when we choose to remain bitter when bitterness bites us.

2. *Bitterness is described as a root.* The "*root of bitterness*" springs up. It implants itself, pops up and grows. And it is an ugly plant that curls and wraps itself around a person's heart.

3. *Bitterness causes trouble.* **BITTER ROOTS PRODUCE BITTER FRUITS!** Bitterness not only strangles the love in our hearts, but it damages and defiles all of our relationships with family and friends.

**Bottom line: bitterness is a spiritual-emotional poison that poisons us and every one connected to our lives.**

Satan, our soul's arch enemy, dances with glee when people become bitter. The devil is into hate, division, destruction and death of all that God calls holy and good.

When we hate another person, we become their slave. Bitterness imprisons us and poisons us and all of our relatives, friends and acquaintances. Bitter people are the most miserable, unhappy, grumpy, cranky, crotchety people on earth. No one, I repeat, no one likes to be around a bitter person very long. **Bitter people are harsh, critical, and negative because the root of bitterness chokes the life and love of God in their heart.**

Someone said "A grudge is one thing that does not get better by nursing it." I agree. So what are we to do if someone has offended us and we feel bitter toward them?

Paul writes in Ephesians 5: 31-32 *"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."*

*Picture sets of clothing that you might wear.* What kind of clothes we have in our closet is the clothes we will clothe ourselves with. Paul tells us what kind of spiritual/emotional clothes to put on and what to put off. **We are to take off bitterness and put on forgiveness. Putting off the icky stuff in verse 31 and putting on the pleasant things in verse 32 is a personal choice I make each and every day.**

If anyone had just reasons and the right to be bitter, it was Jesus Christ. He was betrayed and abandoned by close friends, savagely beaten by cruel strangers, publicly mocked and ridiculed by resentful, envious religious leaders, and He hung on a wooden cross, nails driven through His flesh, to suffer and die a horrible death for man's sins. Rejection. Abandonment. Betrayal. Lies. Blows. Torn flesh. Thorns. Nails. A spear. Men, and even God for a short time, turned their backs on sinless, spotless, innocent Son of God. God's only begotten Son could have been very bitter. **BUT JESUS CHOSE BETTER**

**Through forgiveness, bitter became better.** In Luke 23: 34 are recorded some of the greatest words of all time. Crying out from the cross, looking into a sea of twisted, lost, searching faces, Jesus said *"Father forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing."*

Bitterness could have blasted the blasphemous crowd into oblivion with one word from the Lord. But no. *"Father, forgive them."* These spiritually blind people are in over their heads this time. They didn't realize what was happening there. If Jesus chooses to be bitter, sinners, like you and me, die and go to hell. But if Jesus chooses better, He dies, but rises again so you and I can be forgiven and go to heaven!

Jesus was saying “Father, I forgive them for hurting me. I choose healing over hurt, resurrection over death, better over bitter.”

- **BITTER OR BETTER IS MY PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY.**

Why remain bitter when.....

- Bitterness steals your joy and makes your life miserable.
- Bitterness prevents God from healing your hurting heart.
- Bitterness hinders healing and reconciliation of relationships.
- Bitterness negatively impacts every relationship you have.
- Bitterness can be healed and joy can be restored!!!!

### **Here's How You Can Beat Bitterness And Become Better**

1. **ADMIT** you are bitter. Stop blame-shifting. (Isaiah 58:8-9)
2. **CONFESS** your bitterness to God and receive forgiveness. (I John 1:9)
3. **FORGIVE** the person you feel bitter toward. (Ephesians 5:31-32)
4. **THINK** positive thoughts toward the person (Philippians 4:8-9)
5. **RESTORE** your relationship with the person. (Matthew 5:21-24)
6. **THANK GOD** for removing your bitterness.
7. **DECIDE** to live bitter free everyday!!!!

### **Here's How You Can Keep Bitterness At Bay**

- Choose to live above offense (Psalm 119:165)
- Resist resentment
- Forgive quickly and often (James 1:19-20)
- Give people the benefit of the doubt
- Treat people the way you want to be treated (Matthew 7:12)
- Be like Jesus Christ and serve people. Especially those who bug you!

**Better sounds so much better than bitter. Bitter people are little people. Better people are big people. Bitter people are ugly people. Hardness of heart fouls their face. Better people are beautiful people. Sincere, joyful, Christ-like smiles flow from unfettered hearts.**

**Be the big person. Be like Jesus. Don't be bitter. Forgive and be better. You and everyone connected with you life will be very glad you did!**

**\* CHOOSE TO BE BETTER, REFUSE TO BE BITTER!!! \***

**Steve Roll  
Restoration Ministries  
srrestore.org**