

# Overcoming Bitterness with the Sweetness of the Gospel

More Than Conquerors Counseling Seminar

Briarwood Presbyterian Church

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## Recognizing Bitterness

### A Case Study

A Definition: “Bitterness is defined as a perpetual, intense \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ that leads to \_\_\_\_\_ treatment and \_\_\_\_\_ opinions of others. Bitter people are caught in a state of spiritual toxicity, and their poisonous attitudes and actions cause great damage.”<sup>i</sup>

“Acrid bitterness inevitably seeps into the lives of people who harbor \_\_\_\_\_ and suppress \_\_\_\_\_, and bitterness is always a \_\_\_\_\_.”<sup>ii</sup>

### Common Forms

Bitter response to an offense

Bitter response to life’s circumstances

### A Few Evidences<sup>iii</sup>

Adversarial in conflicts

Acts of vengeance

Withdrawal

Outbursts of anger

Biting sarcasm/Cynicism

Verbal or physical abuse

Condescending in communication

Intolerance

Disrespect

Rebellion

Confabulating offenses

Arrogance

## Biblical Exhortation

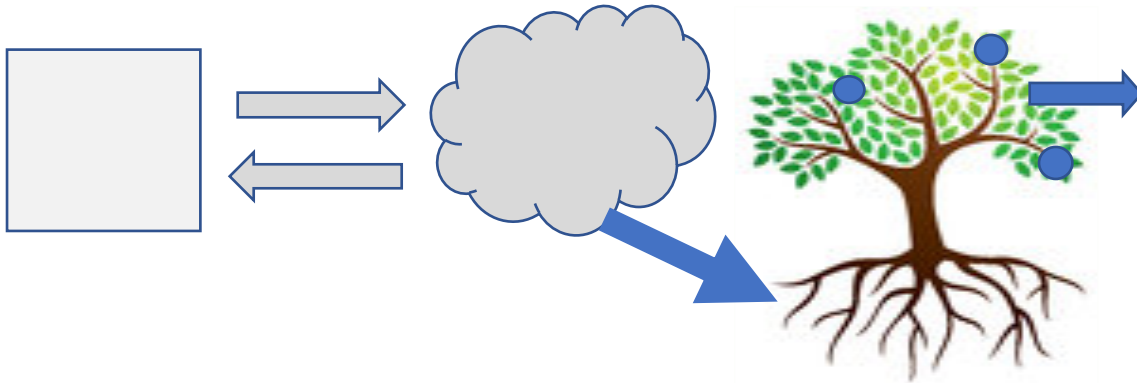
Ephesians 4:31 – Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

Hebrews 12:15 – See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled.

Mark 11:25 - And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

Proverbs 4:23 - Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.

## Cultivating Bitterness: A Diagram



## Biblical Example: 2 Samuel 13-15

Beliefs

Desires

Thoughts

Words

Behavior

## The Taproot

“When bitterness toward \_\_\_\_\_ is acute,  
Then bitterness toward \_\_\_\_\_ is the root,  
And bitterness toward \_\_\_\_\_ is the fruit.”<sup>iv</sup>

Bitterness results when I \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ of life more than  
my \_\_\_\_\_ for an intimate \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_.  
I want to \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_ because of \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
I love the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_; I’m not \_\_\_\_\_  
to \_\_\_\_\_.<sup>v</sup>

Romans 8:28-29 – And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

## Conquering Bitterness

1 John 1:8,9 – If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Mark 11:25 - And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

Romans 12:1,2 – I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

### Transforming Sinful Bitterness (From the Case Study)

<b>Put Off</b>	<b>Put On</b>
Core Beliefs	Core Beliefs
Desires	Desires
Thoughts	Thoughts
Words	Words
Behavior	Behavior

## Grace to Overcome

Ephesians 4:32 – Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Proverbs 19:11 - Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.

Romans 12:9-21 - . . . Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all . . . Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God . . . if your enemy is hungry, feed him . . . Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 – Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. Love never ends.

## Personal Reflection

Viars states, “This problem is bigger than we think.” He also quotes an unknown author who noted, “[B]itterness does more harm to the vessel in which it is stored than the vessel on which it is poured.”<sup>vi</sup>

Viars continues, “The costs of not addressing this issue are high and varied. Some people try to self-medicate with drugs and alcohol in an attempt to dull the pain. Others turn to shallow and illicit sexual relationships to find meaning and happiness in a new person or experience. Bitterness is often connected to anxiety, worry, depression, and fear. Marriages dissolve, and families disintegrate if bitterness is left unaddressed.” (12) “You don’t make bitterness in the microwave. Instead you slow-cook it in the Crock-Pot of your heart as you replay frustrations and disappointments and hurts over and over.” (15)

Are you, or is someone you know, experiencing bitterness?

Is God calling you to counsel yourself or someone else regarding the bitterness?

Have you offended someone who has been prompted to respond with bitterness?

What is God calling you to do?

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<sup>i</sup> Street, John and Janie Street, *The Biblical Counseling Guide for Women*, Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2016.

<sup>ii</sup> Strobel, Lee, quoted in Stephen Viars, *Overcoming Bitterness*, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2021.

<sup>iii</sup> Priolo, Lou, *Bitterness: The Root that Pollutes*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008.

<sup>iv</sup> Street, John D. ACBC Conference Seminar, 2022

<sup>v</sup> Ibid.

<sup>vi</sup> Viars, Stephen, *Overcoming Bitterness*, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2021.