

Message Summary: People enjoy holding things against other people. But the Ephesians 4:31-5:2 text requires us to remove all bitterness and to maintain a tender heart. The question is, "Is it possible to be kind, compassionate, tenderhearted and yet bitter at the same time?" A chronically bitter person is his own worst enemy and he becomes difficult to maintain a relationship with.

HELPING A BITTER FRIEND, Part 1

Ephesians 4:31-5:2

BITTERNESS is when you decide you've been hurt so deeply that you'll never get over it. Hebrews 12:14,15

1. Bitterness is a Choice:

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF BITTERNESS:

- A. BITTERNESS TOWARD A BROTHER. Esau who was bitter with his brother for stealing his birthright and inheritance. Genesis 25:29 – 27:41
- B. BITTERNESS TOWARD GOD. Naomi who was bitter with God for allowing her husband and two sons to die. Ruth 1:1-21
- C. BITTERNESS TOWARD LEADERSHIP. David's men who were bitter with him when they returned home to find their wives and children kidnapped. 1 Samuel 30:1-6

HINTS TO HELP YOU DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT YOU ARE BITTER:

- When you still hurt at just the mention of someone's name.
- If you still have critical thoughts about someone when their name is mentioned.
- When you have worked hard to avoid being anything like your parents.
- If you left home with great relief and swore to never return.
- If you know someone you'd enjoy embarrassing in public.
- If you've ever been abused. Especially as a child.
- If you've been through a divorce.
- If you've been the recipient of broken promises.

LifeGroup QUESTIONS:

BEGIN IT- (5 min) Praising the Lord & pray that God lead the study.

OPEN IT- (10 min) What are some warnings about bitterness that you have been grateful for? Why?

EXPLORE IT- (60 min) Review Sunday's Sermon outline together and any notes people have about the message.

1. How would you counsel a friend who was extremely bitter with a family member?

2. Like Naomi, what causes bitterness towards God?
3. How is your view of God different as a result of studying this topic on Bitterness?
4. What causes bitterness with people in leadership?
5. What roadblocks make it difficult for you to pursue peace in your life while holding on to bitterness?
6. What would have to happen in your heart in order for you to recover from bitterness?

APPLY IT- (15 min) Quietly let each person in the group work through the "Hints to Help you Decide if you are Bitter".

1. What practical steps can you take this week to avoid becoming bitter toward someone who has hurt you recently?