

The poison of bitterness
Applying God's antidote of love
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Introduction: God has a roadmap for the healing of a wounded spirit.

- A. We may have made mistakes, come from difficult background or experienced hard things. The great Physician can bring peace to our lives. **(Jn 10:10)**
 - 1. It takes faith to change long standing patterns of thought and behavior.
 - 2. One of the biggest challenges we face is being honest with ourselves in the shortcomings we face. **(Gal 6:3; 2 Tim 3:13)**
- B. The apostle Paul was once a bitter, insolent man but God transformed him.
 - 1. He was filled with anger in his persecution of Christians. **(Acts 9:1)**
 - 2. He described his own heart. **(Acts 26:11; 1 Tim 1:13)**
 - a. insolent - insolent person, violent aggressor, especially of one who takes a superior attitude and mistreats others.
 - b. Paul was transformed to be someone very different.

I. Do not let a person or an experience transform you into a servant of Satan

- A. Many time Satan wins at both ends. His servant acts out of bitterness to another and the response of the innocent is to respond in bitterness.
 - 1. Faith is tested in dealing with an unreasonable, deceitful, hate-filled person.
 - 2. You cannot change another person against their will! Call upon God for help!
 - 3. Psalms are filled with pleas to God for deliverance. **(Ps 13:2; 25:2, 19; 42:9-11)**
- B. Satan will strongly tempt you to become like your enemy.
 - 1. The world will say: "If someone 'fires the first shot' then all 'rules' are off!"
 - 2. What did Jesus do with His enemies? **(1 Pt 2:21-24)**
- C. This adversity should cause you to draw closer to God. **(Psa 27:11-14)**
 - 1. The world will scream at you: "Hit him back!"
 - 2. There is a calmness and a strength that come from knowing the battle is God's and that He will deliver. **(Psa 60:12; 61:2-4; 31:8)**
 - 3. While your enemy frets and plots in his self-defeating bitterness, you can move on and rejoice in the manifold blessings of God. **(Psa 23:4-6)**
 - 4. You also will draw closer to Christians! What a blessing!

II. Learn to fight and push out bitterness

- A. Understand your own weaknesses and pray for help.
 - 1. We may need to pray for help like this man prayed for faith. **(Mk 9:24)**
 - 2. Also understanding your own family background will help. You too may be like your father/mother in something that is not good.
 - 3. We must recognize that **no one else causes our feelings** in the long run.
- B. Do not take someone else's hurt.
 - 1. There is a place to share with another one. **(Rom 12:15; Gal 6:2)**
 - 2. You put yourself in a dangerous, unreasonable position when you do. How does the person who has never hurt you make it right with you?
- C. Do not hold on to your hurt. **(Phil 3:13; 1 Cor 13:5 NIV)**
"It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs."

1. The more you hold on to it and relive it, the greater it becomes.
 2. Some treat their hurts as their best friends, they cannot get along without them. Who pays the highest price for this?
 3. "To cling to a hurt like your last few cents, does not make good sense."
- D. Do not retreat from something good. **(2 Cor 9:8)**
1. Some choose not to love again, work with people. Who is the loser?
 2. Avoid saying: "I will never: Trust anyone again; be hurt by anyone again; Try in business again; believe in God again."
- E. Learn how to stop the escalation of anger.
1. An **anger circle** can be created in a relationship. Everyone gives in to anger as a **way of life**. Family members are taught to **"dump"** their anger on others.
 2. Change how you speak. **(Prov 15:1)**
 3. Change how quickly you speak. **(James 1:19-20)**
 4. Seek to engage your mind with the question: "What would Jesus do?"
- F. Run from "the fellowship of the miserable." **(Heb 12:15)**

III. We must choose the love of God

- A. The greatest challenge we face is with our brethren. **(Jn 13:34-35)**
1. When we love our enemies, we show God in our lives. **(Mt 5:44-45)**
 2. The love of God will cause me to choose to love. **(Rom 14:15; 1 Cor 8:11)**
- "Imagine Jesus saying: "Please take care of this one for my sake." Would you turn Him down? Instead of looking at a brother with all of his weakness and observing those things you dislike, look to this brother and see the death of Jesus! If this one is that important to Jesus, then so he will be to me."
- B. There are components or characteristics of love. **(1 Cor 13:4-7)**
1. **Love will not give up. (Rom 2:4)**
 - a. How do you view the weaknesses of other Christians?
"Sadly some are like the scowling critic, showing there disapproval but offering no help."
 - b. Remember, when you love another, you are not in the center of things.
 2. **Love will build trust. (Mk 10:21)**
 - a. I will trust one who loves me. They will tell me to my face what I need to hear rather than whisper it behind my back.
 - b. In this gentleness we will find lives and hearts opened to us. Without it we will find ourselves bitter and isolated.
 3. **Love will bring peace within (Jude 2)**
 - a. Those who do not have this love are restless souls. They are not happy.
 - b. The love of God allows me to fully involve myself in God's work.
 4. **Love is the product of real maturity (Jn 13:34-35).**
 - a. Maturity produces a stability and reliability that allows one to be a pillar in the Lord's work.
 - b. This is why it "bears all things...endures all things."

Conclusion: What foundation have you laid for your life? **(Eph 3:17)**

- A. The only way we can learn this love is to get out of ourselves.
- B. When we become the focus then the love of God cannot be present. **(Jn 5:40-44)**