

Why We Hold On to Bitterness

The Big Idea: Bitterness is an unforgiving, resentful, antagonistic spirit toward someone for being wronged. As God's children we must fight to kill any bitterness in us toward others by remembering what has been done for us and by trusting God to transform or judge our enemies.



Bitterness does not look the same from person to person. Some have outbursts of anger; others default to the silent treatment. What does bitterness look like in your life?

Remember that you have been forgiven much.

Read Eph. 4:29–5:2.

How does our bitterness and anger toward others affect our relationship with God? (30)

What sorts of negative behaviors are signs of bitterness or unforgiveness? What should replace these ungodly behaviors?

We are commanded not to hold bitterness or anger, and yet Paul also gives us motivating reasons for us to deal with bitterness. Why should we cast bitterness aside? (4:32-5:2)

Read Matt. 5:43–48

Showing love toward those who have wronged us takes more than our own will power. What valuable tool does Jesus give that will empower us to let go of bitterness and show love? (44)

Why does Jesus expect his followers to reject hate and to put on love?

Why should loss due to our enemy's actions not be of concern if we follow God's call to love?

Trust God to see that justice is done and for relief to be given .

Read 2 Th. 1:4–8

Paul says that God will deal with the persecutions and afflictions we suffer in both a negative and in a positive sense. What is the promise of verse six? What is the promise of verse 7?

Read verse eight. Who is it that God will repay with wrath for the harm done to his people? How should Paul's prayer in Romans 10:1 shape our desires and prayers for our enemies?

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Principles for Bible Reading

Mine Within the Context First

Making connections to other passages enriches Bible study. We need to make connections, but we also need to be careful not to import other passages into the one we are studying before we have given the passage itself its proper due.

The problem with moving all over the Bible too quickly is that we can miss what the particular author wanted to communicate. First let each author speak for himself without making a collage of other passages too quickly.

