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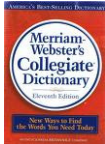
Can Bitter Become Sweet?

Hebrews 12:15: (NASB) 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;

Everyone has issues. Some issues are brought on by bitter experiences and just linger on and on. For many of us, our issues can be life-long experiences that reflect our personality or a character trait that we simply don't like, but don't seem to be able to change. Whatever the case may be, one thing is for sure - where issues remain, bitterness is most likely right at home with them. Can we change this? Is there a way to make bitter become sweet? Stay with us as we look into this relevant and difficult question to try and find some answers.

What is bitterness?

Merriam - Webster online Dictionary:



bit·ter Function: *adjective*

1: being or inducing one of the four basic taste sensations that is peculiarly acrid, astringent, or disagreeable and suggestive of an infusion of hops (compare with salt, sour, and sweet)

2: marked by intensity or severity:

a: accompanied by severe pain or suffering <a bitter death>

b: being relentlessly determined: <a bitter partisan>

c: exhibiting intense animosity <bitter enemies>

d: harshly reproachful

3: expressive of severe pain, grief, or regret <bitter tears>



Breaking free from bitterness - definition, LifeChurch.TV

- Bitterness is a lingering, deep seated resentment over something someone has done to you in your past. Someone did something to you that hurt you deeply, that really made you mad, that really complicated your life and you just can't get past it.*

A few examples of bitterness: Exodus 1:8-14: Slavery made every day an onerous task to accomplish. This is a harsh reality that doesn't go away and can cause bitterness.

1 Samuel 22:1-2: David is exiled in his own country and ends up being a leader of 400 others. They wanted to follow after someone who understood them.

Taste Test in the Christian Questions studio!

Bitter experiences can directly relate to taste:
It's the one taste you just don't want to have in your mouth.

Rick and Vicki experimented with:

Bitter baking chocolate...

which leaves a terrible aftertaste in your mouth, but bitter chocolate can become sweet. Throughout the show, Rick tasted and commented on:



Pineapple to cleanse the palette

Salty potato chips

Sour candy

Sweet dark chocolate, milk chocolate, and Skittles

From where does bitterness come?

Bitterness can enter through the doorway of accident or loss: Jeremiah 31:15: There is probably nothing more bitter in life than the loss of a child.

bitter
sweet
sour
salty



Jesse Lieberman Part 1, Johnson & Johnson Services (The story of a near fatal accident producing a quadriplegic)

In 2003, trying to help a neighbor locked out of the apartment below theirs, Jessie, a third year medical student and part-time serious body builder, climbed over the balcony rail. The railing broke away and he landed on his head on the concrete.

- *I thought, I have a spinal cord injury and I'll get better.*
- *But the reality was he was a quadriplegic.*

Most often, bitterness enters through the doorway of our own choice: Some bitterness we inflict upon ourselves. In this case, Esau sold his birthright, but he is bitterly saying that Jacob took it. This seems to have much to do with ego.

Satan is the originator of ego: Isaiah 14:13-14

We wanted to help, Lifechurch.TV, an excerpt from a "commercial" for a Lifechurch.TV presentation on bitterness

- *We met this guy at a Bible study; he had fallen on hard times. One thing we thought we could do was let him stay at our house. The next thing you know, he needed money.*
- *We gave him some, and he needed more and more. After awhile, we realized he was manipulating us.*

How to remove the bitter edge? Accept the experience is from God.

Jeremiah 2:17-22: If you forsake His ways, the experiences become bitter. You can have bitter experiences without turning you bitter.

Bitterness can come because our hearts are out of harmony with God: Acts 8:21-23

Bitterness can come because we rely on earthly and devilish reasoning: James 3:14-16

Jesse Lieberman Part 2, Johnson & Johnson Services

- *Jesse got married and got his degree and went on to specialize in physical medicine and rehabilitation. There is life after injury.*
- *Everybody learns when they meet Jesse - if he can do what he is doing, then we can all achieve any of the goals that we have.*

Bitterness as a result of our choices can give us the "it's his fault" perspective on life:

Hebrews 12:7-17: Oftentimes bitterness comes from difficult experiences, but it is all for our eternal good if we can be rightly trained by them.

- Once we adopt "it's his fault," our angst becomes misdirected;
- Now that we have angst, it grows without inhibition secretly within us;
- That root having taken a stronghold can now begin to affect others;
- The result is MANY are defiled.

So, it seems that bitterness can be more easily detected in the earlier stages of development; however, the further it develops, the harder it is to see - WHY??

The Steven Siller Story told by his brother Frank (Part 1), Glenn Beck Radio

- *My brother was (New York) firefighter Steven Siller, a dynamic young man.*
- *On September 11, 2001, he was on his way home to play golf with myself and our two other brothers. He left his firehouse and heard on his scanner what had happened.*
- *His fire company had already left, so with 65 pounds of gear on his back, he ran over two miles from the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel to the Towers where he gave up his life in the largest rescue ever, when 25,000 people were rescued that day.*

2 Corinthians 8:10-12



What is the "gall of bitterness?"

As a result of bitterness finding one of these paths into our heart, we now become vulnerable. Bitterness makes us numb to the reality of sin within ourselves. As it gets bigger, one would think it would become more noticeable, but in fact, one becomes more numb to it. It becomes a part of us and we no longer see it.

🔊 **Difficult not to hate this man, Lifechurch.TV an excerpt from a "commercial" for a Lifechurch.TV presentation on bitterness**

- *We found out later this guy did something that I can't say to someone in my family.*
- *You're not supposed to hate, I know that. But it is really, really difficult for me not to hate this man.*

While he telling this story, he is drinking from a bottle labeled "poison." This illustrates how the bitterness welling up inside of him is poisoning him. Bitterness can go from bad to worse unless we change it.

Here is another experience of great bitterness: Acts 8:9-23: Simon, as a magician enjoying the attention, believed in miracles and wanted to be able to perform them as well. He offered the Apostles money to get the power to give the Holy Spirit! Peter told him that he would have no part in this. Christianity take note! This is not about money or self-aggrandizement.

Bitterness can grow imperceptibly and become a big monster we carry around on our backs.

🔊 **The Steven Siller Story told by his brother Frank, (Part 1A), Glenn Beck Radio**

- *My baby brother - married with 5 kids - orphaned at age 10 - we raised him more like a son than a brother. It is almost like it was yesterday; the pain and loss are still there. But he was so full of courage and strength that we know that we have to make sure that every day that we live, we LIVE IT!*

This is a great example of a bitter experience that did not turn the person bitter.

Just how deep is the damage caused by bitterness?

1 Timothy 4:1-2: When you walk away from God, you walk towards bitterness.

Where there is bitterness, we are the sweet.

🔊 **God will give him what he deserves - Hostage week, Lifechurch.TV**

- *If I ever run into this guy face to face, after he lied to us and took advantage of us, stole from us and did what he did, for his sake he should turn and run. He will meet God one day and God will give him what he deserves!*

In this part of the video, the speaker drinks the rest of the poison, pours gasoline over his head and strikes a match! What you are seeing is a man who is self-destructing and so consumed by the bitterness that he can't escape it anymore. He is essentially going up in flames.

Bitterness creates in us fountains of pride:

James 3:7-18: Bitterness can permanently disable us!

- Once bitterness has taken root, it poisons our words. We then spread the poison to others.
- We become a walking contradiction, speaking both blessing and cursing.
- We now pollute our spiritual environment with unspiritual and devilish attitudes.
- Now, rather than witnessing to the Gospel, our lives witness against it! ("You are a Christian...?!")
- If we contaminate our spiritual environment, surely we also contaminate our physical environment.

🔊 **The Steven Siller Story told by his brother Frank (Part 2), Glenn Beck Radio**

- *We were so moved by our brother's actions...that we started a foundation in his honor called The Steven Siller Tunnel to Towers Foundation. Every year we have a run that retraces his final*



heroic footsteps. The first year we had about 2,000 and this year we expect about 50,000 people to be there.

This gives us a sense of something sweet built upon something bitter. We want to see the sweet even though the bitter may still be there.

Proverbs 17:22: *A joyful heart is good medicine but a broken spirit dries up the bones.*

Can we eradicate bitterness from our lives?

What is bitterness?

- It is a waste of perfectly good emotional energy!
- It is a poor excuse for not taking positive action.
- It is our personal expression of laziness regarding our own destiny.
- It is a symptom of an ego gone bad.
- It is a complete waste of time!

Bitterness can also be a result of true tragedy and therefore is not easily comprehended or controlled.

The bitter pain of the loss of a child in stillbirth:



"The Promise (Part 1)," Liz Cloven

Part of the way for us to handle bitter experiences: Psalms 27:14: (NASB) *Wait for the LORD; Be strong and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the LORD.*

Proverbs 4:20-23: ²⁰*My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings.* ²¹*Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart.* ²²*For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh.* ²³*Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.*



"The Promise (Part 2)," Liz Cloven

John 11:25: (KJV) *Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:*

Revelation 21:3-4: Sometimes the bitter experience will be with us the rest of our lives, but there is still hope because of God and His promises.

So, even in the depths of the hardest and most bitter experiences, we may not be able to find relief in this life, but we are promised relief in the resurrection.

Isaiah 35:5-10: (NRSV) ⁵*Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; ⁶then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy...* ⁸*A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people;...the redeemed shall walk there.* ¹⁰*And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*

With the Lord, even bitter can be sweet. Remember that there is a happy ending promised by God for the world of mankind. Even when you are dealing with bitterness on a daily basis with bitter experiences that are permanent in your life, you can still find something sweet in the hope of God's plan.

So can bitter become sweet?

***For Jonathan and Rick (and Vicki!) and Christian Questions,
Think about it...!***