

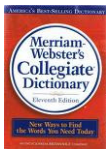


Can Bitter Become Sweet?

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: (NASB) ⁸Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. ⁹He said to his people, Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we. ¹⁰Come, let us deal wisely with them, or else they will multiply and in the event of war, they will also join themselves to those who hate us, and fight against us and depart from the land. ¹¹So they appointed taskmasters over them to afflict them with hard labor. And they built for Pharaoh storage cities, Pithom and Raamses. ¹²But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread out, so that they were in dread of the sons of Israel. ¹³The Egyptians compelled the sons of Israel to labor rigorously; ¹⁴and they made their lives bitter with hard labor in mortar and bricks and at all kinds of labor in the field, all their labors which they rigorously imposed on them.

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: (NASB) ¹So David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam; and when his brothers and all his father's household heard of it, they went down there to him. ²Everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented gathered to him; and he became captain over them. Now there were about four hundred men with him.

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
sweet
sour
salty



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: (NASB) *Thus says the LORD, A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; She refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more.*

There is probably nothing more bitter in life than the loss of a child.

 **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:

Genesis 27:34-36: (NRSV) ³⁴When Esau heard his father's words, he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, Bless me, me also, father! ³⁵But he said, Your brother came deceitfully, and he has taken away your blessing. ³⁶Esau said, Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times. He took away my birthright; and look, now he has taken away my blessing. Then he said, Have you not reserved a blessing for me?

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: (Note how many "I's" are in this scripture!)

Isaiah 14:13-14: (NKJV) ¹³For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; ¹⁴I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.

 **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: (NRSV) ¹⁷Have you not brought this upon yourself by forsaking the LORD your God, while he led you in the way? ¹⁸What then do you gain by going to Egypt, to drink the waters of the Nile? Or what do you gain by going to Assyria, to drink the waters of the Euphrates? ¹⁹Your wickedness will punish you, and your apostasies will convict you. Know and see that it is evil and bitter for you to forsake the LORD your God; the fear of me is not in you, says the Lord GOD of hosts. ²⁰For long ago you broke your yoke and burst your bonds, and you said, I will not serve! On every high hill and under every green tree you sprawled and played the whore. ²¹Yet I planted you as a choice vine, from the purest stock. How then did you turn degenerate and become a wild vine? ²²Though you wash yourself with lye and use much soap, the stain of your guilt is still before me, says the Lord GOD.



Vicki, Rick, and Trish
in the studio

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: (NRSV) ²¹You have no part or share in this, for your heart is not right before God. ²²Repent therefore of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. ²³For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and the chains of wickedness.



Can you see bitterness approaching?

Bitterness can come because we rely on earthly and devilish reasoning:

James 3:14-16: (NRSV) ¹⁴But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth. ¹⁵Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. ¹⁶For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind.

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: (NRSV) ⁷Endure trials for the sake of discipline. God is treating you as children; for what child is there whom a parent does not discipline? ⁸If you do not have that discipline in which all children share, then you are illegitimate and not his children. ⁹Moreover, we had human parents to discipline us, and we respected them. Should we not be even more willing to be subject to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share his holiness. ¹¹Now, discipline always seems painful rather than pleasant at the time, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. ¹²Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, ¹³and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed. ¹⁴Pursue peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. ¹⁵See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble, and through it many become defiled. ¹⁶See to it that no one becomes like Esau, an immoral and godless person, who sold his birthright for a single meal. ¹⁷You know that later, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, even though he sought the blessing with tears.



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: (NASB) ¹⁰I give my opinion in this matter, for this is to your advantage, who were the first to begin a year ago not only to do this, but also to desire to do it. ¹¹But now finish doing it also, so that just as there was the readiness to desire it, so there may be also the completion of it by your ability. ¹²For if the readiness is present, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.

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: (NRSV) ⁹Now a certain man named Simon had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he was someone great. ¹⁰All of them, from the least to the greatest, listened to him eagerly, saying, This man is the power of God that is called Great. ¹¹And they listened eagerly to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic. ¹²But when they believed Philip, who was proclaiming the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. ¹³Even Simon himself believed. After being baptized, he stayed constantly with Philip and was amazed when he saw the signs and great miracles that took place. ¹⁴Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. ¹⁵The two went down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit ¹⁶(for as yet the Spirit had not come upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). ¹⁷Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, ¹⁹saying, Give me also this power so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit. ²⁰But Peter said to him, **May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain God's gift with money!** ²¹You have no part or share in this, for your heart is not right before God. ²²Repent therefore of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. ²³For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and the chains of wickedness.

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: (NASB) ¹But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, ²by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron...

When you walk away from God, you walk towards bitterness.

Where there is bitterness, we are the sweet.



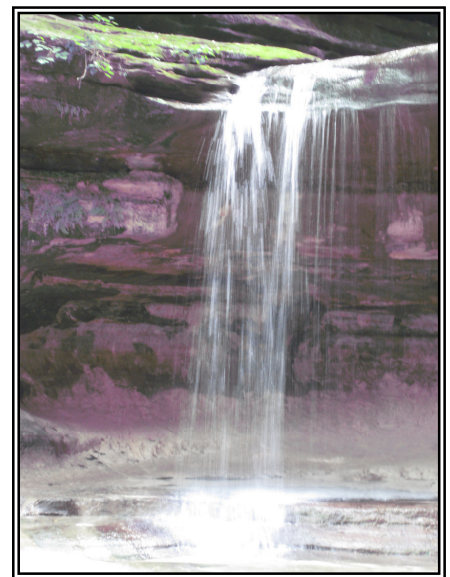
God will give him what he deserves - Hostage week, Lifechurch.TV

- *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: (NRSV) ⁷For every species of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by the human species, ⁸but no one can tame the tongue—a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God. ¹⁰From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this ought not to be so. ¹¹Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and brackish water? ¹²Can a fig tree, my brothers and sisters, yield olives, or a grapevine figs? No more can salt water yield fresh. ¹³Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom. ¹⁴But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth.



¹⁵Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. ¹⁶For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind. ¹⁷But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. ¹⁸And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.



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:



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



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: (NASB) ³*And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, ⁴and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the former things have passed away.*

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... ⁸A 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. ¹⁰And 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...!*



*And now even more to think about...
only in the Full Edition of CQ Rewind!*



Some Old Testament words for bitter:

Bitter: Strongs #4785 Marah (maw-row'); bitter; Marah, a place in the Desert: the spring with bitter water which was three days travel from the crossing place of the Red Sea in the peninsula of Sinai

Exodus 15:23: *And when they came to **Marah <4785>**, they could not drink of the waters of **Marah <4785>**, for they were **bitter <4751>**: therefore the name of it was called **Marah <4785>**.*

Bitter: Strongs #4751 mar (mar); or (feminine) marah (maw-row'); bitter (literally or figuratively); also (as noun) bitterness, or (adverbially) bitterly:

Genesis 27:34: *And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding **bitter <4751>** cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father.*

Bitter: Strongs #4844 meror (mer-ore'); or merowr (mer-ore') bitter herb, bitterness



Exodus 12:8: *And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with **bitter <4844>** herbs they shall eat it.*

Some New Testament words for bitter:

Bitter: Strong's #4087 pikraino (pik-rah'-ee-no) to make bitter 1a) to produce a bitter taste in the stomach 2) to embitter or render angry, indignant 2b) to be embittered, irritated

Colossians 3:19: *Husbands, love your wives, and **be <4087>** not **bitter <4087>** against them.*

Bitter: Strong's #4088 pikria (pik-ree'-ah); acidity (especially poison), literally or figuratively bitter gall, extreme wickedness, bitterness, bitter hatred

Acts 8:23: *For I perceive that thou art in the gall of **bitterness <4088>**, and in the bond of iniquity.*

Bitter: Strong's #4089 pikros (pik-ros'); bitter, harsh, virulent

James 3:11: *Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and **bitter <4089>**?*

James 3:14: *But if ye have **bitter <4089>** envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.*

The context of Ephesians 4:31 (our theme verse) provides a formula or recipe for combating and overcoming bitterness in our lives:

Ephesians 4:23-4:32: (NKJV) ²³and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. ²⁵Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another. ²⁶Be angry, and do not sin, do not let the sun go down on your wrath, ²⁷nor give place to the devil. ²⁸Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. ²⁹Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. ³⁰And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. ³²And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

These scriptures give us a number of "ingredients" to help us put bitterness in perspective. These help us see it and eradicate it from our lives.

Ingredient #1: Sanctification

There is no honor in bitterness. This is a "back to basics" step - finding again that first love of truth and righteousness that compelled us to walk away from evil.

Ephesians 4:23-24: (NKJV) ²³and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

Ingredient #2: Dwell Only in Truth

It is not enough to merely abstain from lying; we must be sure to proactively speak the truth as well.

Ephesians 4:25: *Therefore, putting away lying, Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.*



Ingredient #3: Rein in Anger and Wrath:

Don't let anger consume you. This is telling us that the act of harboring anger and wrath is not merely an emotional response but in fact it is a choice. It is okay to be angry, but it is not okay to act on that anger in a sinful manner.

Ephesians 4:26-27: ²⁶Be angry, and do not sin do not let the sun go down on your wrath, ²⁷nor give place to the devil.

Ingredient #4: Proper Actions

Do not continue in habits of life that damage; rather replace them with activities of life that contribute.

Ephesians 4:28: Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.

Ingredient #5: Proper Words

This is the test of our words, for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks!

Ephesians 4:29: Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.



Seek to replace the bitterness with the peace of God and rest in God:

Hebrews 4:11-16: (NKJV) ¹¹Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. ¹²For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. ¹³And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account. ¹⁴Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.