



Replacing Marital Bitterness with Forgiveness

Handouts: Chapter #7

Bitterness and anger deeply damages marriages. In this chapter we will outline clear steps to eliminate that bitterness and gain that sweet relationship marriage ought to be.

Review: _____ Cycle and _____ Cycle

A) Understanding the root of bitterness

A half apology is _____ apology. Why?

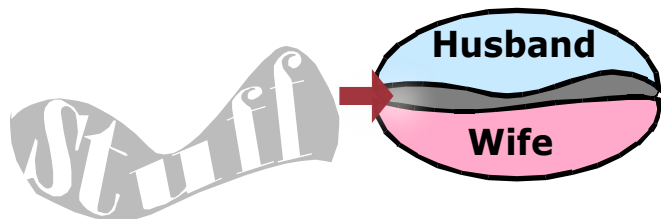
When forgiveness has not taken place, resentment still lingers in the heart.

* Possible manifestations of resentment

- Rolling your eyes
- Ignoring simple requests
- Easily irritated
- Calling names in "fun"
- Criticizing spouse's efforts
- Ungratefulness
- Jest about shortcomings
- Feeling put out

"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice" (Ephesians 4:31).

An _____ bitter spirit is the disguised problem hidden behind many of a couple's problems. Many people minimize it by calling it an 'attitude problem.'



The Tree of Bitterness



Is pruning a solution?

* The Vicious Cycle of Bitterness

Bitterness is so disastrous because it can easily bypass the conscience.

✦ #1 _____ the Offense

The offended person grows in his bitterness by constantly thinking about how he was wronged.

✦ #2 Thinking Evil

The offended person deliberates how this offender deserves all sort of evil. Sometimes these thoughts remain on the wish level while at other times malice is carried out.

✦ #3 Fight Guilt

How can a person be mean to another and not be overburdened by the guilt function of the conscience?

This person justifies his wrong response by deceiving himself that he is doing something right such as carrying out revenge. "By means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron" (1 Timothy 4:2).

The Cycle of Bitterness



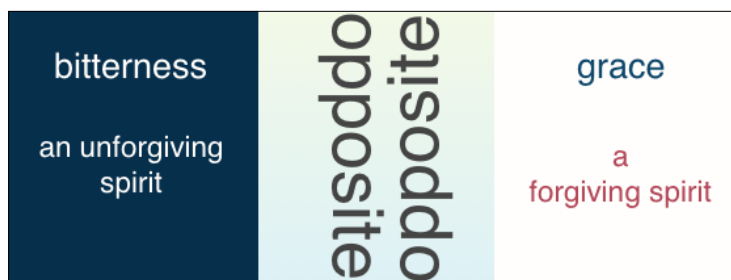
* Hebrews 12:15

"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" (Hebrews 12:15).

✦ 1) _____ of God's grace (The mark of bitterness)

Detect bitterness by a lack of grace. Grace is the extension of kindness to someone who does not deserve it, graciousness. Bitter people cannot be gracious in their heart. They are quick to get angry and criticize. The result of not extending forgiving to others is not receiving forgiveness from God.

"For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions" (Matthew 6:14-15).



✦ 2) Root of bitterness (The nature of bitterness)

- (1) Roots cause permanence

The seed is an offense held onto. The seed sprouts roots as soon as possible. Plants with developed roots are hard to pull out.

- (2) Roots cause _____

Roots draw nourishment from thinking about offense. Roots develop all sorts of manifestations (troubles).

✦ 3) Be defiled (The result of bitterness)

- (1) Bitterness spreads
- (2) Bitterness causes defilement
 - Hard not to be effected.
 - Couples are greatly troubled.

B) Principles for overcoming bitterness

- 1) Jesus said that we are to forgive liberally. Forgive everyone all the time.

2) Never take revenge; Vengeance is God's.

"Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:21-22).

3) Put on kindness, love and forgiveness.

"Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord" (Romans 12:19).

4) Make no exceptions for extra difficult times.

"Put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other..." (Colossians 3:12-13).

"BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS UPON HIS HEAD. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:20-21).

Understanding the _____ of Forgiveness

- Can you forgive a spouse who has not asked for forgiveness? Why or why not?
- How can you forgive your mate when they have not apologized?
- Should you mention to your spouse the things that offended you?

C) Steps to eliminating a bitter heart

1) Check for something you have done _____.

You can do this by gently asking if you have done anything that has offended your spouse.

2) Determine to solve it before sleep.

"BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity" (Ephesians 4:26-27).

3) Forgive and don't wait to be asked

- a) Generally forgive "Love forgives a multitude of sins."
- B) Specifically forgive (those offending things)

"I know I had spoken roughly this afternoon, could we talk about it a little. Let me start by apologizing for the way I spoke...."

4) Gently confront

- a) Difficult
- b) Priority of relationship
- c) Danger when spouse doesn't forgive

Husband: "I noticed that you are quiet. Did I do anything that hurt you?"

Wife: "You haven't been talking much lately. Is there something you are displeased with?"

5) Kindly discuss "Speak the truth in love"

"Isn't it better just to forget about it?"

"I'm sorry for speaking so rudely to you at lunch. It was improper. Will you please forgive me?"

6) Give time

- Talk as much as possible.
- Talk more later if necessary

7) Confess and forgive

- Personal forgiveness is different than God's forgiveness
 - Forgiveness does not mean the person did no wrong
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D) Practical steps for the couple to take

* 1) _____ forgive your spouse.

"I (your name) _____ will always forgive my spouse right away for any wrong thing he or she has done against me."

* 2) Catch up on the past.

You want to get all those bitter roots out of your heart. It is true you cannot do it for your spouse?

- Write a list of specific things you have been resentful of. but you can at least clear up what bitterness lies in
- Confess your bitterness to God and how you have failed your spouse. your own heart. Seek His forgiveness.
- Ask your spouse for forgiveness for these failures.

* 3) Arrange procedures for future offenses.

- Urgency of forgiveness
- Arrange a signal that you need to talk.
- Arrange for a certain place for discussion (eg. dining room table).
- Peaceably mention your resentment. (Sometimes skip this step).
- Pray together before beginning

* Take Home

➡ Forgive your spouse for everything and ask for forgiveness.

➡ Set up policies that encourage you two to better be able to talk honestly about things you are having difficulty forgiving.

BGM #7 Answers Replacing Marital Bitterness
Degenerative Cycle
Regenerative Cycle
A half apology is no apology. Why?
An unforgiving bitter spirit is the disguised...
#1 Nurturing the Offense
1) Short of God's grace
2) Roots cause troubles
Understanding the power of forgiveness
1) Check for something you have done wrong.
1) Always forgive your spouse
"I (your name) will always forgive my spouse..."