

## CWW Week 42 - Bitterness

Hi everyone and welcome back to Church Without Walls. It's good to be with you again for week 42. And, uh, we're rocking through the year pretty, pretty furiously and, uh, great topics we're, we're uncovering and also lots of wonderful feedback from you all, uh, especially around, uh, the daily checkup devotionals.

A lot of people really enjoying those. And I can tell you, I'm getting so much out of, uh, out of, uh, putting them out to you. It's, it's. A wonderful journey for me. Uh, so I want to thank you all for your feedback and comments. Uh, for those of you who've been emailing me, I will get, get to you as soon as I possibly can.

As you can imagine, life is pretty hectic for me, and, um, it's, uh, we don't have any staff, so we're doing the best we can with what we've got. I wanna thank all those people who are supporting us in prayer and otherwise, uh, it all helps, believe me. And, uh, we feel your, we feel the power of your prayer. And based on that, let's start praying right now.

Dear Lord, father God Dear Papa, we thank you so much for your presence. We thank you for the infilling of your Holy Spirit. Lord, as we unpack your word today, we pray that you will speak to us in ways that we've never heard before, that we may grow closer to you, and that we may heal our lives. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.

Don't forget if you're interested in, uh, doing Bible studies with other like-minded individuals. Go to [hoodies bible studies.com](https://hoodiesbiblestudies.com) and uh, you can link up with people there from all over the world. Um, at the moment, the numbers are building, uh, number of facilitators are building and the number of people joining those groups.

It's, look, it's a wonderful way to grow closer in fellowship with other people. You may not live in the same neighborhood, so you might meet by Zoom or telephone call, or you may meet in a local church setting that you set up yourself even in your own home. A lot of people do church in the park these days, and, uh, that's not a bad idea either, given the climate we're in.

So we know that Jesus is coming soon. That's why you're here. Uh, you know that there are things happening in the world that you're really struggling to explain and that, uh, Jesus gives you a sense of hope and peace for the future, and he, cer certainly does that for me. So let's unpack his word today as we discuss the topic of bitterness.

The title for week 42. Bitterness, anger, resentment, all those things go hand in hand. And, um, those things can work together to unsettle us and destroy our serenity, to rob us of our peace, to rob us of the joy that's available if we just live our lives normally without, uh, you know, extensive expectations and, uh, all those other things that make us feel less than, less than human sometimes, and rob us of that piece that we need in order to live a life filled with Christ.

That's what Jesus came to earth to give us a life of hope and peace. The gospel message is good news and he wants us to embody that and to embrace it and to ide it. Bitterness I've seen destroy many, many lives, including it's had a hand in getting me to do some pretty crazy things at times. Crazy things, you know, I can actually look, look to you now, look into your eyes and say that I have no hate in my heart for anybody.

It's taken years to get there, and I can't describe the peace that I feel, the absolute serenity that I feel, um, living without hate. Sure, there's lots of people who have behavior that I don't like and, uh, but I dislike the behavior. I don't despise the person because I don't know the pain that drives that behavior.

We've all got a background. We've all got a rich tapestry. If we looked at our life as a tapestry on the wall, it'd be brilliant and vibrant in many cases, and the lower half would probably be filled with a lot of dark threads that we wish weren't there. But if we went round behind the tapestry, remove those threads, and looked at it from the front again, the whole thing had collapse, it wouldn't look as vibrant.

You know, life is a journey of character development. How many times have I said this? And the whole purpose of the character development is to become more like Christ. So the things that, uh, sharpen our character and develop our character are things that are sometimes hard to live with. Bitterness is one of those things, but overcoming it is a wonderful thing.

You know, in the book of Revelation, uh, revelation chapter 21 and verse seven, it, I paraphrase it. It says, for he who overcome, shall inherit all things, and I shall be his father, and he shall be my son. What a beautiful promise. That's my life verse. I love that verse. And, um, you know what, we, we live in bitterness of all kinds.

We're often bitter at each other. We're bitter at ourselves. Uh, I've been spent a lot of time in bitterness at myself for being the kind of person I was before I found Christ. And, uh, I've been able to repent and move on from most of that. But each day I remember things that I need to repent of, and sometimes I do things through the day that I need to repent of.

In fact. I am far from healed, yet I'm still a very much a work in progress as we all are. So, um, I, I'm devoted to making sure that I keep developing my character in such a way. I remember my stepmother, God rest her soul. She's, um, she's now asleep in the grave. But, um, she was very hard to get along with, you know, she was in my life for 30 or 40 years and she was very hard to get along with.

She was bitter and twisted about all manner of things, but there were lots of reasons. She had a past that was very painful. She'd been hurt by a few people and hurt very, very badly. But then she went into dementia and she became a much better human being when she lost a memory, because she lost the memory of those things that caused her bitterness, and she was loving, and that's who she really was.

When those, when all that bitterness was gone, she was a totally different person. It's a shame she had to get dementia to realize that. I'm starting to think that we all need a little bit of dementia when it comes to bitterness and anger, don't you? So, um, you know, we, we've gotta, uh, we've gotta come to terms with it.

I've seen my own wife, Michelle, when she forgave the man who raped her every weekend for six years when she was a child. She harbored resentment and bitterness and she wanted revenge. And, um, all of a sudden she realized. When she read the Bible, you know, how could she have the audacity to ask God to forgive her if she couldn't forgive those who've hurt her?

We're gonna talk about that a little bit in a moment. So I invite you all to lay aside your, your, um, resentment and bitterness. Give it some thought, give it some prayerful thought. Listen to this week's devotionals and unpack your life and see if you can't find a way of getting rid of some of that stuff.

So let's go to our Bible now and discuss it. Uh, I wanna look at verses that warn against bitterness, and I want you to go to your Bibles, Hebrews, the book of Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 15, chapter 12 and verse 15. And it says, see to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God, that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble.

And by it. Many become defiled. Bitterness is described as a root, something that grows beneath the surface, but can spread and defile many. That's true. I mean, the roots of a weed often grow underneath the ground before the weed appears on the surface. That's how things work. And bitterness works the same way.

Um, I want you to look now at Ephesians chapter four, verses 31 and 32. I'll give you a moment to go there. Ephesians 4 31 and 32. That's in the New Testament, uh, written by the Apostle Paul. And this one says, get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other just as Christ.

Just as in Christ, God forgave you. Paul calls believers to actively remove bitterness and replace it with forgiveness and compassion. That's what's so amazing about grace. That's what's so beautiful about grace. And,

um, you know, these things define us as they defile us. And, um, you know, you ask people how you're going and they say, fine.

And I say, fine's, a weather forecast. How are you really going? What's really going on for you? Christ came to lead by example. There are so many scriptures that lead to that, especially when it talks about bitterness and anger. Let's look at bitterness in the human experience. We'll go to, um, the Book of Job, chapter seven and verse 11.

Boy, if there was anyone who had any reason to be filled with hate and bitterness, it was job and especially towards God, but he was faithful to God and boy was he rewarded later on. In Job seven 11, it says, therefore, I will not restrain my mouth. I will speak in the anguish of my spirit. I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.

Now, job's suffering brought him to a place of deep soul bitterness, showing that even the righteous can wrestle with it, but he overcame and God rewarded him greatly. Let's now go to the Book of Ruth, chapter one and verse 20. The Book of Ruth chapter one and verse 20, and this speaks about Ruth's relationship with Naomi.

It's a great book, Ruth. Don't call me Naomi. She told them, now let me rephrase that. Don't call me Naomi. She told them, call me Mara because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. Naomi, after losing her husband and sons renamed herself, Mara, meaning bitter. A raw expression of grief man to even change your name to bitter.

That, uh, but you know, it's an expression of grief. And grief takes time to overcome. And remember the old saying, time heals all wounds. Let's look at freedom from bitterness now as we go to Colossians chapter three in verse 13, Colossians three, verse 13, and let me find that. And it reads, bear with each other and forgive one another.

If any of you has a grievance against someone, forgive as the Lord forgave you. Forgiveness is the key to uprooting bitterness and healing relationships. You know, some people carry bitterness around, like dragging a dead corpse on a rope behind them. They wonder why people avoid them. The stench of their bitterness destroys their relationships.

You're dealing with bitterness that deep. I know a lot of people who are, there were times when I used to, even in recent times, I mean in the political sphere at the moment, it's very hard to turn your hate and bitterness towards politicians. But don't they have enough power already? Why do we give them the power over our serenity?

Doesn't make sense, does it? You know, God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change. The courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference. The only way you're gonna change the government is on polling day, and you may not be successful then. So sometimes you've just gotta live with it and be an example to others through your relationship with Christ.

So bear with each other and forgive one another. If any of you has any, has a grievance against someone, forgive us. The Lord forgave you. Forgiveness is the key to uprooting bitterness and healing relationships. Let's now go to James three and verse 14. James three verse 14. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth.

Do not boast and be false to the truth. Bitterness in the heart leads to distorted thinking and pride. It leads us to say things and do things, our actions, thoughts, words, and deeds. But don't do us any favors, and that's the truth. So let's look at a summary on how to respond to bitterness. First, you've gotta recognize it.

Bitterness can take root subtly, but affect many areas of your life and your relationships. Confess it like Job and Naomi. Bring your bit of feelings honestly before God uprooted through forgiveness. God calls us to forgive others as he forgave us. Replace it. Replace bitterness with kindness, compassion, and truth.

And remember, people only drive you crazy if you give them the keys. You need to recognize it. You can't heal the wound by saying it's not there. You know the pain that caused you. Bitterness is real. You have a right to it. You might even justify it, but don't live with it. Get rid of it quickly because it will grow like a cancer in you.

There's no replacement for grace and compassion. Let's close with a prayer. Dear Lord, father God, we just pray that you will root out the bitterness in our hearts. Lord, examine our hearts and know our ways. Please turn our hearts from stone into flesh. Remove the concrete that is bitter us and take it away and replace it with love and compassion and the softness.

That overcomes all evil. Father, we thank you for your grace and mercy and we pray that you guide and lead us this week as we discuss bitterness in the devotionals. In Jesus' name we pray, amen. God bless you all. You know he is waiting to and if he loves you, you know what? So do I 'cause we're all made in his image.

I'll see you next week when we discuss another topic on church without walls. God bless you all and bye for now.