

DRIPS

DEALING WITH OUR RELATIONAL IRRITATIONS: POISED TO SERVE DRIPPING #2: BITTERNESS

I. What is bitterness?

A. The Greek word “pikra”

1. In a literal sense, it means to make something painful or poisonous, like the water in Rev. 8:11.
2. As it relates to emotion, it means to make something harsh, an expression of anger, a provocation to pain.
3. The antithesis means to rejoice, to make merry, to be cheerful.

B. This particular term is only found in four New Testament passages

Acts 8:23 The gall of bitterness is “wickedness”

Rom 3:14 Bitterness is part of the description of an unrighteous person

Eph 4:31 Bitterness is equated with malice (in all its forms)

Heb 12:15 The root of bitterness suggest a pattern of life that is offensive to God.

C. Bitterness

1. Is an attitude: “A bitter, malignant and hostile disposition” (Meyer)
2. It’s a behavior: It’s “offensive to God and obnoxious to men.” Deut. 32:28-35
3. It affects our speech: Job 7:11 “I cannot keep from speaking. I must express my anguish. My bitter soul must complain.”
4. Is destructive: “Hostile disposition” (padfield.com)

II. Some biblical examples

A. Cain (Gen. 4:1-8)

His bitterness caused him to murder Abel

B. Saul (I Sam. 16:13-23)

He “brooded with jealousy and resentment” and tried to murder both David and his son Jonathan.

C. Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:20-23)

His jealousy led him to try and purchase the gift of God with money

III. Sources of bitterness

A. Jealousy or envy

See Gen. 37:4 Look at how Joseph’s brothers responded.

B. Conviction (a guilty heart)

See John 7:7 Watch how hatred and bitterness are stirred up in the hearts of those confronted by Jesus.

C. Strife

See James 3:14-18 Strife produces bitterness and confusion. Righteousness produces peace.

D. Self pity and resentment (a sense that things are not “fair”)

E. An unforgiving spirit. Consider the example of Joseph in Gen. 50.

Be careful: Matt. 6:14-15 ““If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.”

IV. Let’s be clear: Bitterness is sin and sin has consequences

Prov. 5:22 “An evil man is held captive by his own sins; they are ropes that catch and hold him.”

A. Bitterness affects relationships: It causes divisions, resentment and hate

B. Bitterness is self-obstructive:

1. It can be emotionally debilitating

2. It can be physically debilitating

“Bitterness may forecast patterns of biological dysregulation (a physiological impairment that can affect metabolism, immune response or organ function) and physical disease.” (Dr. Cansten Wrosch)

V. There is hope beyond bitterness

- A. **A**cknowledge that bitterness is sin. Prov. 29:22 *“An angry person stirs up conflict, and a hot-tempered person commits many sins.”*
 1. *“Father, I acknowledge that I’ve held resentment and bitterness against my _____. I confess this as sin and ask you to forgive me. I forgive _____. Remind me, Lord, to not hold any more resentments, but rather to love this person. Father, I ask you to also forgive _____. Thank you for hearing and answering my prayer. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”*
- B. **S**teer clear of negativism. Prov. 29:20 *“Do you see someone who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for them.”*
- C. **K**eep focused on joy. Prov. 29:6 *“Evildoers are snared by their own sin, but the righteous shout for joy and are glad.”*

Discussion Questions:

1. In what ways can bitterness be considered an attitude or a behavior? Give some practical examples of each.
2. If you have ever experienced bitterness, what was the root cause? How did it affect your relationship?
3. In a practical sense, what is the relationship between bitterness and a forgiving heart?
4. From your experiences, what are some practical tools with which to combat bitterness?