

Small Group Guide: Freedom from Bitterness

Opening Question:

- What stood out to you most from the sermon on bitterness? Why?

Key Takeaways:

1. Bitterness comes from pain and hurt that is not dealt with properly.
2. Bitterness can cause physical, emotional, and spiritual damage.
3. Bitter people often become overly critical, justify their bitterness, and celebrate others' misfortunes.
4. Bitterness can lead to rage, anger, brawling, slander, and malice.
5. God's grace and forgiveness are key to overcoming bitterness.

Discussion Questions:

1. How would you define bitterness in your own words? Have you ever struggled with it?
2. The pastor mentioned that bitterness often grows from unresolved hurts. Can you think of an example where this has happened in your life or someone you know?
3. What surprised you about the potential consequences of bitterness (physical, emotional, spiritual)?
4. The sermon mentioned that bitter people often struggle to see bitterness in themselves. Why do you think this is? How can we become more self-aware?
5. Discuss the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation. Why is this distinction important?
6. How does God's forgiveness of us relate to our ability to forgive others?

Bible Study Questions:

1. In Hebrews 12:14-15, we are encouraged to "make every effort to live in peace with all men" and to avoid letting a "bitter root grow up." What practical steps can we take to ensure that bitterness does not take root in our hearts, and how can we foster peace instead?
2. Ephesians 4:26-31 lists several negative emotions and actions, like rage and malice. How does Paul suggest we address these emotions, and what role does forgiveness play according to these verses?
3. Pastor Dan referenced Psalm 139:23-24 in relation to letting God reveal hidden bitterness. How can we incorporate this prayer into our daily lives to ensure continual heart examination and growth?
 - What obstacles might we face in allowing God to reveal and remove bitterness, and how can we overcome them?

4. The sermon highlighted that "bitterness keeps a detailed record of wrongs." How does this contrast with the biblical description of love in 1 Corinthians 13:5, and what can we learn from this comparison?
 - In what ways can we practice love that "keeps no record of wrongs" in our daily interactions?
5. Based on Hebrews 12:14-15, how does the pursuit of holiness relate to being a peacemaker, and what does this look like in practical terms within our Community Groups and beyond?

Practical Applications:

1. Take time this week to pray Psalm 139:23-24, asking God to reveal any hidden bitterness in your heart.
2. If you identify an area of bitterness, commit to forgiving the person involved, even if they haven't asked for forgiveness.
3. Choose one relationship where you need to set healthy boundaries. Discuss with the group how you might do this lovingly and firmly.
4. Practice replacing bitter thoughts with grateful ones. Each day this week, write down three things you're thankful for.
5. If someone in your life is struggling with bitterness, commit to praying for them daily for the next month.

Closing Prayer: Close the session by praying for each other, asking God to heal any areas of bitterness and to help group members extend and receive forgiveness.