

20 Days of Trouble

Topic #7 – Bitterness

Textbook Def:

Proceeding from or exhibiting strong animosity; resulting from or expressive of severe grief, anguish, or disappointment; marked by resentment or cynicism.*

Real-Life Look:

I did a great job. I was always on time, completed my work, and consistently went above and beyond. Fired? Are you kidding me? Cutbacks? Yeah, they'll cut back essential, valuable employees and end up in big trouble. In fact, I wouldn't mind seeing their doors close.

My English teacher sucks! Tests that don't cover the material taught, unrealistic expectations, and tons of homework every weekend. No wonder everyone hates this man. If I end up failing this class it will be entirely his fault.

The last time I checked, we had a child TOGETHER, but now you've decided you don't 'feel' like being responsible? Really? When did parenting become a choice? I hate my ex so much I could just scream. It would be easier if he would just go away and leave us all alone.

I've been unfairly accused. I absolutely DID NOT SAY what she said I did. Her story was completely and utterly fabricated, but how do I defend myself? It's her word against mine, and once a claim is made, false or not, doubt is placed. I never want to be in the same room with her again. You want me to make small talk and be cordial? Forget it! She doesn't deserve it. I refuse.

Sword of the Spirit:

“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.” Ephesians 4:31

“See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.” Hebrews 12:15

“When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.” 1 Peter 2:23

Breaking It Down:

For all the other ‘troubles’ in life that aren’t huge stumbling blocks for me, I make up for them in spades with bitterness. Unfortunately, bitterness is something I know altogether too much about, but I’ve got great reasons, of course.

If you were married to my ex, well let’s just say, you’d be bitter too.

I’ve had friends who have been disloyal, family members who have been intentionally hurtful, and situations where the end result wasn’t remotely just or fair. I’ve been hurt.

Sound familiar?

And talk about holding a grudge? I can battle with the best of them in this category. Overcoming the grip of bitterness and the agony of bondage that accompanies such evil is no small task, especially when you feel justified in your anger. And I usually do. If I wasn’t justified, I wouldn’t be angry to begin with, right?

My greatest accomplishment? Learning to keep my mouth SHUT. And it probably comes as no surprise that this has also been my greatest challenge.

But I have only to think of Jesus Christ on the cross to remind me of how I’m called to behave.

Jesus had every right to be bitter. Talk about wronged and persecuted? He suffered the ultimate betrayal at the hands of evil men. He was misunderstood, unappreciated, and abused. Yes, He surely would have been justified in anger and bitterness, but He refused to succumb to a moment of either. Awe-inspiring, humbling, and the ultimate example to follow.

My sufferings pale in comparison.

The lesson? *It matters not what people do to us or what happens.* There will be those who are nasty and mean-spirited. Sometimes our own poor choices result in the consequences we are subject to endure. There are even instances where stuff just happens and bad situations arise without ill-intent. The propensity for bitterness is ever-present.

What matters most is our reaction. How will we handle the inevitable trials of life?

The Benefit in Decluttering Trouble:

We've already discussed the costs associated with anger and harboring bitterness falls right in lockstep with them:

- The aching pit in your stomach and lump in your throat
- The fury raging in your chest
- Sleepless nights
- Endless negative thoughts
- Health issues
- Misery

The list goes on and on. No good can come from holding a grudge.

So how do we declutter bitterness? Holding our tongue and not lashing out in defense is terribly difficult. Letting someone else get the last word in takes the strength of a giant. Letting go of ill-feelings and not allowing animosity to fester can stretch you far beyond your ability. Checking things off your list and moving on emotionally requires discipline and commitment.

Am I asking the impossible?

No. I'm simply asking you to do what is right. God didn't think it was too much for you and neither do I. I'm a living example that even the most broken, bitter soul can find victory in peace and healing.

If you release the grip of bitterness, you'll no longer care who had the last word or what untruths were spoken about you. You'll dismiss foolishness. You'll stop blaming others for your own poor choices and shortcomings. You'll overlook the small stuff and focus on the bigger, better picture. Most importantly, you'll find peace and healing.

There is joy indescribable in a heart that beats for all the good in the world, for a mind that chooses to follow Christ's selfless example, and for a soul that rests on the promises and infinite glory of God.

Declutter bitterness and delight in the sweet taste of peace and joy.

*thefreedictionary.com

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