

- Bitterness is holding a grudge toward someone who has wronged you
- Joseph understood how to keep from being bitter

The KJV dictionary defines bitterness as having a deep distress of mind, holding a grudge, or feeling hatred toward someone whom you believe has done something against you. When you are bitter you hold onto the anger that you believe is justified against them. One way you can know if you are bitter toward someone is to ask yourself if you are holding onto your anger against them or if you continue to resent them for what they have done. You have ill will toward that person.

We understand that unforgiveness leads to bitterness. When you are forgiving you are willing to overlook offenses and are inclined to be reconciled to that person. When you refuse to forgive someone over time that attitude usually grows into bitterness. You become increasingly unwilling towards reconciliation. Bitterness happens when you refuse to let go of your anger toward someone.

**Question #1:** Read Colossians 3:13. In your own words describe what this verse instructs you to do.

**Question #2:** Why is it hard to forgive someone?

**Question #3:** Describe what it is like to be around someone who is bitter.

**Question #4:** Have you ever experienced being bitter toward someone in your life?

(1) How do you believe it affected your life?

(2) In what ways do you think others in your life were affected by your bitterness?

**Question #5:** Fill in the blanks below:

"And grieve not the \_\_\_\_\_ of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all \_\_\_\_\_, and wrath, and \_\_\_\_\_, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye \_\_\_\_\_ one to another, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven \_\_\_\_\_." Ephesians 4:30-32.

- a. Whom do you grieve when you do not follow these verses in Ephesians?
- b. Read Ephesians 4:32 again and then read Colossians 2:13. Notice the past tense used: "hath" Ephesians 4:32; "forgiven", "all" Colossians 2:13. How many of your sins has Christ forgiven you?
- c. What is keeping you from giving up any bitterness that you have toward someone for their sin against you?

**Question #6:** What counsel does Paul give you in Philippians 3:13-14 about someone's offense against you?

**Question #7:** What are you warned about concerning bitterness in Hebrews 12:1-2, 14-15?

**Question #8:** You may ask, but that person who wronged me has not confessed to me their sin and they haven't asked me to forgive them.

(1) Slowly read Romans 8:28; 1Corinthians 13:4-7; Ephesians 4:32. List three ways that obeying these verses will allow you to forgive that person who has wronged you.

1.

2.

3.

**Question #8 continued:**

- (2) Offenses against us will be different: some are minor and some are severe. In some more severe situations the course of action may require you to set limits for that relationship. Forgiving that person simply means you are not holding onto your anger. You realize Christ has forgiven you and commands that you forgive others. When an offense is so severe, and perhaps continual, you may need to limit how much you should include that person in your life. Should their behavior show a positive change over time (so that you can see it is real) then your forgiveness will allow you to reconcile with them. Continue praying about it.
- What advice do you find in Proverbs 22:3; Proverbs 25:19; Proverbs 27:12; and Romans 12:18, about setting limits or boundaries with someone who has severely wronged you?

- a. Forgiveness in some instances is a process. What promise does God give us when we take our problems to Him? See Philippians 4:6-7.

- (3) What assurance do you have that justice will prevail when that person who has wronged you seems to be getting away with their evil behavior? See Romans 12:19.

One of our favorite men in the Bible is Joseph, the son of Jacob (Israel) because he is a great example of forgiveness. To refresh your memory of Joseph you may want to read Genesis 37-50. His life was fascinating and as Joseph looked back on his youth he was able to see how all the bad that his brothers had done to him was ultimately for good.

**Question #9:** Read Genesis 37: 12-35. Briefly describe the evil that was done to Joseph by his brothers.

**Question #10:** Read Genesis 37:36; Genesis 39: 1-6; Genesis 41:33-57 (note verses 39-44 & 57). How did God take the evil which happened to Joseph and turn it into something good?

**Question #11:** Read Genesis 42:1-8. Who came to Egypt to buy corn? How did Joseph respond when he saw them?

**Question #12:** Read Genesis 45:1-8; Genesis 50:20. What understanding did Joseph have about the evil his brothers had done to him and the good that eventually followed?

**Question #13:** Read Romans 8:28 along with Genesis 50:20.

1. How are they similar?
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What comfort does that provide when evil happens to us?

Bitterness is something that we understand must be avoided; therefore, unforgiveness must be avoided because it may lead to bitterness. We cannot forgive in our own strength. We also cannot have victory over fear, worry, despair and depression, sorrow, anger, and bitterness in our own strength. We do it by walking in the Spirit, which is our choice to do – or not do – every day. "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16). The Holy Spirit uses the Word of God that we have placed in our heart: "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psalm 119:11). Our walk as a Christian has hills and valleys, so remember what Paul told us in Philippians 1:6: "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ". And never give up praying about it!