

Overcoming Bitterness & Rejection

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Resolving Bitterness

Circumstances and relationships have hurt each of us. Those hurts cause wounds that can easily fester into a bitter spirit leaving us with scars of emotional pain that we can carry for years. Unless we understand and resolve the bitterness through genuine forgiveness, we will not be able to face similar circumstances in the future. We will block the pain, causing us to emotionally lock-up when confronted with a new hurt in a relationship. More emotional pain is then buried in our hearts leaving us void of inner peace.

Bitterness is a tool of Satan to defeat believers. When unresolved within a person's spirit. Bitterness creates resentment, anger, and emotional damage. Paul traces the development of unresolved bitterness in Ephesians 4:31. Bitterness leads to wrath (outbursts of anger), wrath leads to anger (rage, constant state of anger), anger leads to clamor (making a public scene), clamor is followed by slander (derogatory, injurious speech), and slander leads to malice (inner hatred of heart). The natural consequence of harboring an attitude of bitterness is that it eventually controls you.

Scripture warns against bitterness. Paul warns that bitterness is like a "root." The longer it is allowed to grow, the more difficult it is to get rid of. Hebrews 12:15 states that a root of bitterness left to grow will bring defilement to "the many." This root will produce the blighted fruit of anger, ungratefulness, a critical attitude, insensitivity to others, revenge, mistrust and depression. Unresolved bitterness is also like a highly contagious disease that has a contaminating and destructive effect on others.

The cure for bitterness is forgiveness. In order to resolve bitterness, we must first understand and experience God's forgiveness of our sin. God chose to focus on His desire to forgive us rather than to hold us accountable for our failures (Isaiah 43:25; 55:7; Psalm 103:12). He could have demanded justice and required us to pay for our sins, but instead, placed them on Jesus Christ. He satisfied the payment on our behalf. The moment we believe by faith that Christ died for us, we are set free from the penalty of our sins.

Forgiveness demands a payment. When someone has sinned against us and hurt us, our sense of justice demands that a fair payment be made to us for their failure. If that person cannot pay or chooses not to pay, we

resent the injustice and either become bitter and angry, leading to depression, or we can exercise forgiveness leading to peace. If we choose to forgive, as God forgave us, and assume the emotional debt or payment for the pain that person caused us, we will be free from resentment, bitterness, anger, and depression. As we free the offender through forgiveness, we become free from the effects of holding on to those damaging attitudes.

Forgiveness isn't easy. We never feel like forgiving someone who has hurt us because deep inside we believe they deserve to pay for the damage they caused us. Forgiveness involves our willingness to go to the cross for the person who has hurt us and to embrace the emotional pain they have caused us. Jesus didn't feel like going to the cross, but chose the Father's will (Matthew 26:39). Forgiveness is taking the focus off of ourselves and graciously choosing to go to the cross on behalf of the wrongdoer.

Bitterness can be directed against

Others for the pain they have caused us

...leading to resentment and anger.

...leading to putting up walls to protect ourselves from further pain. Leading to broken relationships with others.

...leading to revenge against them.

Ourselves for our own failures

...leading to negative thoughts of condemnation.

...leading to feelings of despair and worthlessness.

...leading to rejection of oneself.

...leading to suicidal thoughts.

God for the events He allowed to occur

...leading to resentment and anger toward God.

...leading to feelings of rejection from God.

...leading to inability to be intimate with God.

...leading to the questioning of one's relationship with God.

...leading to an inability to trust God.

...leading to questioning God's goodness.

Forgiveness involves:

A choice: The person who has been wronged can choose to forgive or not to forgive.

Releasing: It is the voluntary act of releasing someone from the emotional damage caused by his sin and no longer holding him responsible for the consequences of that failure.

Substitution: One person pays for the emotional pain that another caused. In doing so, the debt of emotional damage is paid (assumed).

Resolving bitterness involves...

Choosing to forgive.

Releasing the pain from within our hearts.

Paying the emotional pain others have caused us by forgiving them.

Allowing the Lord to heal the pain we are experiencing within our heart.

Prayer

“Lord, I acknowledge that over the years, I have developed resentment and anger toward others who have hurt me. This has caused me to experience inner pain and to build walls between others and myself. It has kept me from being open with them.

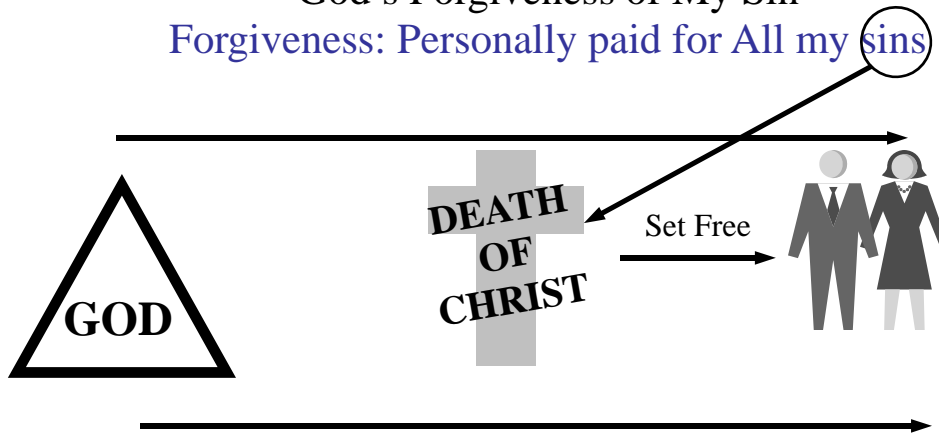
“Lord, I choose to forgive each individual who has hurt me. I am willing to pay the price for the emotional pain they caused me. I desire to be free to love and be emotionally open with each person who has hurt me. I want to show them kindness, a tender heart, and a forgiving spirit.

“Lord, reveal to me those areas of bitterness, resentment, and anger within me that have been buried for so long. I want to identify and resolve each one of them. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

Forgiveness

God's Forgiveness of My Sin

Forgiveness: Personally paid for All my sins

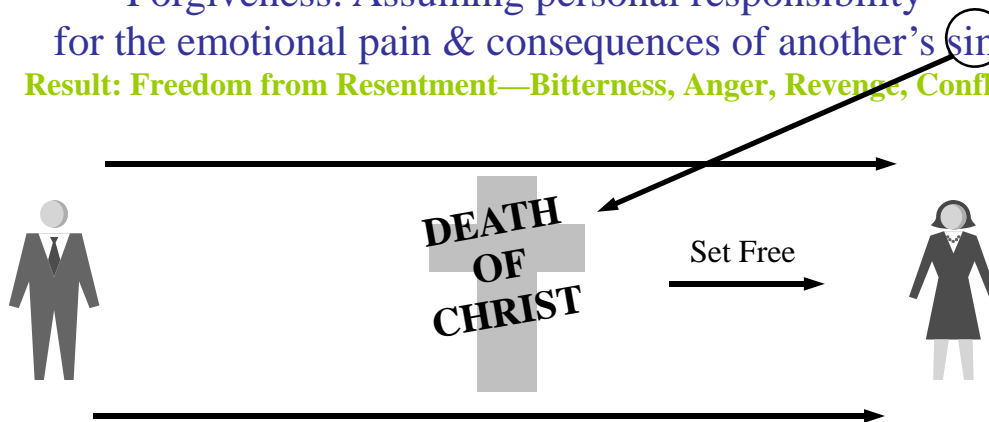


Justice: Make me pay for my own sins

My Forgiveness of Another's Failure

Forgiveness: Assuming personal responsibility for the emotional pain & consequences of another's sin

Result: Freedom from Resentment—Bitterness, Anger, Revenge, Conflict



Justice: Make them pay for their failure toward me

Result: Bitterness, Anger, Revenge, Conflict

Emotional Pain Words

- Abandoned
- Accused
- Afraid
- Alone
- Angry
- Anxious
- Apathetic
- Ashamed
- Attacked
- Bad
- Belittled
- Betrayed
- Bitter
- Blamed
- Cheap
- Cheated
- Condemned
- Confused
- Controlled
- Deceived
- Defeated
- Defenseless
- Degraded
- Defrauded
- Despair
- Destroyed
- Devalued
- Don't belong
- Dirty
- Disappointed
- Disgusted
- Disrespected
- Dominated
- Embarrassed
- Empty
- Exposed
- Failure

- Fearful
- Foolish
- Frustrated
- Guilty
- Hated
- Hurt
- Inadequate
- Indecent
- Inferior
- Insecure
- Insensitive to my needs
- Insignificant
- Invalidated
- Lied to
- Lonely
- Manipulated
- Mindless
- Mistreated
- Misunderstood
- Molested
- Neglected
- Not cherished
- Overwhelmed
- Pressure to perform
- Pressured
- Rejected
- Repulsed
- Revenge
- Ruined
- Sad
- Scared
- Secluded
- Self-disgust
- Stressed
- Stupid

- Suffocated
- Suicidal
- Taken advantage of
- Torn apart
- Trapped
- Trash
- Ugly
- Unaccepted
- Unloving
- Unloved
- Unclean
- Unfairly treated
- Unfit
- Unimportant
- Unlovable
- Unnecessary
- Unprotected
- Unsafe
- Unsympathetic
- Unwanted
- Used
- Violated
- Vulnerable
- Wasted
- Wicked
- Worthless
- Wounded
- Wrongly judged

Steps to Resolve Bitterness from Childhood

Use the following worksheets: *Family Members Who Have Hurt Me*; *Emotional Pain Words*; *Jesus Heals the Pain*

Step 1

Worksheet: Family Members Who Have Hurt Me. List each of the ways you have been hurt by your parents, siblings or other family members. In the first column, write the individual's name. In the second column, list the ways you were hurt (the issues). In the third column, list the emotional pain you felt. Choose at least four to six words to describe your pain by referring to the worksheet, *Emotional Pain Words*.

Step 2

Pray through each issue. Using the prayer at the bottom of the worksheet, pray through each issue out loud, making sure that you open the pain within your heart in order to release it. When coming to the phrase, "I am willing to pay," remember the payment Jesus made for your sins on the cross and accept the opportunity of paying for the emotional pain that others have caused you.

Step 3

Allow Jesus to heal the pain. As you pray through the prayer of forgiveness, unresolved issues inside your heart will surface. For example, if you have been rejected by your mother and have felt lonely, unloved, and worthless, you will begin to feel pain within your heart. As you feel the intensity of the emotional pain, close your eyes and share each part of the pain with Jesus. "*Jesus, I feel so... (share specifically what you are feeling). Jesus, come into my pain and speak peace.*" Wait quietly as the Holy Spirit, who lives in you, prompts you with a verse of Scripture, a word picture or a thought. (The Holy Spirit will not speak in an audible voice.) If more pain surfaces, tell Jesus each area of emotional pain until the Spirit of God prompts peace in your heart. Record the painful memories and Jesus' words of comfort on the worksheet *Jesus Heals the Pain*. Each time we have been hurt by another person, the enemy feeds lies into our minds to deceive and further damage us. Record those lies in the third column.

Step 4

Pray through this sheet for thirty days. When the pain of a specific incident is gone from your heart, check off the name of the person who caused it. The goal is to resolve all the emotional pain created by each hurt. The memory will remain but the pain can be spiritually resolved through forgiveness.

Family Members Who Have Hurt Me

	Release	Pay
List each family member who has hurt you in the past.	How did they hurt you? (List Issues)	Describe the emotional pain caused by the hurt.
Father • • • Mother • • • Step-parents • • • Siblings • • • Others • • •		

“Lord, I choose to forgive _____ for _____ causing me to feel _____, and I am willing to pay for the emotional pain and consequences that _____ has caused me. I ask You Lord Jesus, to take back the ground I gave to the enemy through my bitterness and I yield that ground to Your control.”

Steps to Resolve Bitterness Toward Others, God, & Self

Use the following worksheets: *People Who Have Hurt Me*; *Emotional Pain Words*; *Jesus Heals the Pain*

Step 1

Worksheet: *People Who Have Hurt Me*. In the first column, list the names of those outside your family who have hurt you in the past. In the second column identify the specific incidents or issues that caused the pain you are feeling. In the third column choose at least four to six words to describe the pain you felt. Refer to the worksheet, *Emotional Pain Words*.

Step 2

How God has hurt me. If you are blaming God for any event or problem you have experienced, write down each way you feel He has hurt you. Many times, we are locked against God because we think what has happened to us is His fault. Often Satan puts thoughts in our minds accusing God for our problems; i.e., allowing us to grow up in a dysfunctional home. Identifying these lies and breaking them helps us realize where they came from in the first place. Praying through the sample prayer at the bottom of the chart will lead to freedom from those lies.

Step 3

How I've let myself down. If you cannot forgive yourself for decisions you made in the past you will become bitter toward yourself. When we do not forgive, the anger held inside can lead to problems with depression and negative thoughts. We must forgive and release ourselves. On the worksheet, list each problem or issue for which you blame yourself. For example, you may not be able to forgive yourself for having had an abortion, for having physically hit your child, or for having committed adultery, etc.

Step 4

Pray through each issue. Having listed all the individuals and how they have hurt you, pray aloud the prayer at the bottom of the worksheet. Pray it through for each incident and person. As you feel the intensity of the emotional pain, close your eyes and share each part of the pain with Jesus. "*Jesus I feel so...* (share specifically what you are feeling). *Jesus, would You come in and speak peace to my pain?*" Wait quietly as the Holy Spirit, Who is living in you, prompts you with a verse of Scripture, a word picture or a thought. Record the pain, Jesus' words of comfort and the enemy's lies on the *Jesus Heals Pain* chart.

Step 5

Pray through this sheet for thirty days. When the pain is gone from your heart, check off the specific incident. The goal is to resolve all the emotional pain created by each hurt. The memory will remain but the pain can be spiritually resolved through forgiveness.

People Who Have Hurt Me

	Release	Pay
List each family member who has hurt you in the past.	How did they hurt you? (List Issues)	Describe the emotional pain caused by the hurt.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friends • • • Teachers, students, classroom experiences • • • Employer, Employee • • • Believers, church situations, pastor, leader, etc. • • • God (List the ways you think God has hurt you) • • • Myself (List each area for which you cannot forgive yourself.) • • • Others • • • 		

“Lord, I choose to forgive _____ for _____ causing me to feel _____, and I am willing to pay for the emotional pain and consequences that _____ has caused me. I ask You Lord Jesus, to take back the ground I gave to the enemy through my bitterness and I yield that ground to Your control.”

Jesus Heals the Pain

Painful Memory	Invite Jesus to Comfort the Painful Memory <i>(Describe Jesus' response)</i>	Identify Lies

Steps to Resolve Bitterness Toward Your Spouse

Use the following worksheets: *My Spouse Who Has Hurt Me*; *Emotional Pain Words*; *Jesus Heals the Pain*

Those who are closest to us are many times the ones who hurt us most deeply. A person may develop more resentment and frustration toward one's spouse than anyone else. If one has experienced divorce, the hurts will be even more intense and the need for resolution all the greater.

Step 1

Worksheet: How My Spouse Has Hurt Me. On the following worksheet, identify each way your spouse has hurt you. If you have had previous marriages, use a separate sheet for each spouse. Then list four to six emotional pain words in the second column that describe how each incident made you feel. Refer to the page *Emotional Pain Words*.

Step 2

Pray through each issue. Pray aloud the sample prayer for each of the offenses you listed. Be open and willing to accept the emotional pain that has caused by your spouse. Focus on releasing the pain inside your heart (forgiveness) through paying for the emotional pain caused by your spouse. Be sure that you are reaching down to the pain in your heart, not merely saying the words. It is the consequence of their failure that you are choosing to no longer hold them responsible for. When you are experiencing the intense pain, close your eyes and share it with Jesus. "*Jesus I feel so...*(share specifically what you are feeling). *Jesus, would You come in and speak peace to my pain?*" Wait quietly as the Holy Spirit will bring peace to your heart through a thought, word picture, or verse of Scripture. Record the painful memories, Jesus' words of comfort along with the lies of the enemy on the next worksheet.

Step 3

Pray for thirty days. Pray through the list of your spouse's offenses daily for thirty days. As you do, you will find that the pain will leave. When it is gone, check off the particular issue that has been resolved in your heart. The goal is to have all the issues checked off in one month. The memory of the hurt will remain but the inner pain will turn to inner peace.

My Spouse Who Has Hurt Me

Release	Pay
Define each way your spouse has hurt you in the past.	Describe the emotional pain you feel because of the hurt.
1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10.	

“Lord, I choose to forgive _____ for _____ causing me to feel _____, and I am willing to pay for the emotional pain and consequences that _____ has caused me. I ask You Lord Jesus, to take back the ground I gave to the enemy through my bitterness and I yield that ground to Your control.”

Jesus Heals the Pain

Painful Memory	Invite Jesus to Comfort the Painful Memory <i>(Describe Jesus' response)</i>	Identify Lies

Steps to Resolve the Pain I Have Caused My Spouse

Use the worksheet: *Ways I Have Hurt My Spouse*

Step 1

Worksheet: *How I Have Hurt My Spouse*. We often hurt our closest loved ones without realizing how deeply the pain goes. After having completed the previous section, *My Spouse Who Has Hurt Me*, transfer that information from your spouse's worksheet to your worksheet, *Ways I Have Hurt My Spouse*. Record the ways you have hurt your spouse in the left-hand column and the emotional pain you caused him/her in the right-hand column.

Step 2

Sincerely apologize. Sit facing your spouse making eye contact. Take his/her hand and sincerely go through the statement at the bottom of the worksheet, confessing each of the ways you have hurt him/her. For example: *"I was wrong in making fun of your family, causing you to feel rejected, angry, frustrated, not valued, overwhelmed, and unloved. Would you choose to forgive me?"*

Step 3

Receive the response. After each statement of apology, allow your spouse to respond. He/she will respond in one of three ways:

- 1) *Yes, I forgive you.*
- 2) *I need more time to spiritually resolve it.*
- 3) *Emotionally, I can't face it or release it right now.*

If your spouse responds with option 2 or 3, give him/her time to work through it and ask again in the future for forgiveness for that offense.

Ways I Have Hurt My Spouse

Describe each hurt you caused.	Describe the emotional pain you caused.
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

“I was wrong in *(Specific Hurt)*, causing you to feel *(Describe the hurt it caused)*. Would you choose to forgive me?”