

## MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF PARENTING PART II - BITTERNESS

Bitterness is an ugly word. That's what resonates in my spirit when I hear it used. I certainly would not want to be called "bitter". If I were to say someone was bitter, then I would expect a strong reaction from them. I believe that we dress bitterness up a bit. It sounds better if we are upset, or hurt, or angry. These are much more socially acceptable ways to feel. But bitter? No way am I ever bitter. I would ask you to take a deeper look at what you're feeling about certain situations. Here's what Webster has to say about bitter: "distasteful or distressing to the mind galling <a bitter sense of shame>; marked by intensity or severity: accompanied by severe pain or suffering <a bitter death>; being relentlessly determined: vehement <a bitter partisan>; exhibiting intense animosity <bitter enemies>; harshly reproachful <bitter complaints>; marked by cynicism and rancor <bitter contempt>." Be brave and at least admit to yourself that there's been some bitterness in your heart at some point in time. It's our responsibility as parents to look deep inside ourselves. We need to go to those hard places. When we do this we heal. We can then be more fully present for our children.

Bitterness is rooted in the times that we've been deeply hurt. It begins from the times that we've been betrayed. It's a close cousin to resentment. They probably go hand in hand. Maybe it comes from resentments that cause you to want to get even. The kind of resentments that causes you to not want anyone to know what you're thinking. The consequences of bitterness are severe. Bitterness destroys us spiritually, physically, and emotionally. Bitterness destroys our relationships. It comes between us and others. It comes between us and God. We forget the goodness of God. Psalm 73:1-2 (NIV): "Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold." We envy what we believe is the easy life of others. Psalm 73:3-9 (NIV): "For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. They are free from common human burdens; they are not plagued by human ills. Therefore pride is their necklace; they clothe themselves with violence. From their callous hearts comes iniquity; their evil imaginations have no limits. They scoff, and speak with malice; with arrogance they threaten oppression. Their mouths lay claim to heaven, and their tongues take possession of the earth." We question the value of living a Godly life. Psalm 73:10-14 (NIV): "Therefore their people turn to them and drink up waters in abundance. They say, How would God know? Does the Most High know anything? This is what the wicked are like always free of care, they go on amassing wealth. Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure and have washed my hands in innocence. All day long I have been afflicted, and every morning brings new punishments." Enough said.

Healing from bitterness is hard. It is painful. That's what challenges from our children bring to us. Opportunities for healing through putting love into action. Opportunities for restoration. We forgive, we forgive, we forgive. Here's a step by step action plan from Romans 12:14-21 (NIV): "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but

leave room for Gods wrath, for it is written: It is mine to avenge; I will repay, says the Lord. On the contrary: if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” Forgiveness is the key. I won’t elaborate on forgiveness in this article. It deserves the attention of a full newsletter, maybe two.

**In Christ,**

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