

Repentance Leads To Christ-like Character

The Sin of Irresponsibility with God's Law

(part 3)

Intergenerational Failure To Instill Collective Wisdom

“But from everlasting to everlasting the LORD’s love is with those who fear Him, and His righteousness with their children’s children”

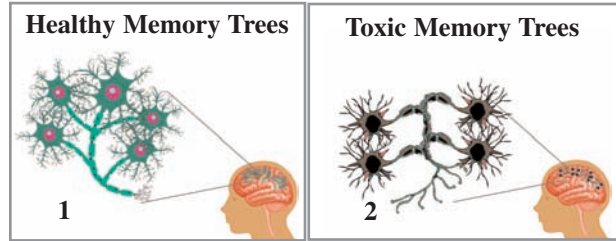
(Psalms 103:17).

In our previous segment we discussed various family responsibilities found in God's Law for those who are in Christ. As we've seen, our Father has made clear specific ways for husbands, wives, parents and children to live out their love for Him and for each other. In this segment we want to focus on *intergenerational* responsibilities.

When one generation who loves and serves Jesus as their Lord lives righteously according to God's commands, they create a **collective wisdom** that gets passed along to succeeding generations. The children can be raised with the wisdom of God's Word being lived out by those who love them.

On the other hand, when a generation lives wickedly, disregarding God's laws, they create a vacuum of biblical wisdom for succeeding generations. Children who are raised *without* the foundation of God's righteous commands inherit sinful motivations and actions.

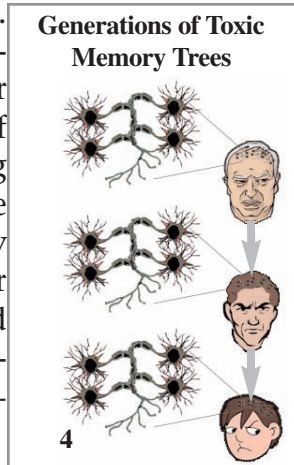
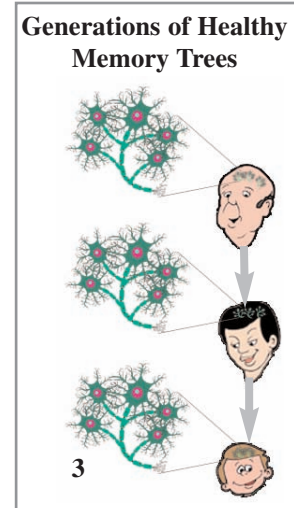
In Lifebyte 73. *Stop Toxic Thoughts—Replace Toxic Memories*, we discussed how “memory trees” are created in the cortex of the brain. As a new piece of information enters your brain, that thought trav-



els along a neural pathway to find a similar memory in the cortex, forming a “memory tree” of related information. These may be healthy memories (diagram 1) or toxic memories (diagram 2).

Godly instruction and role modeling form healthy memories, and thus healthy motivations.

Sinful motivations and actions produce the opposite effect—unhealthy, toxic memories. Research years ago followed the history of various families from the 17th century onward. They were able to determine the effects of one generation on succeeding generations. A righteous generation produced a far larger proportion of righteous offspring (diagram 3). Those who lived wickedly produced a far larger percentage of wicked offspring in succeeding generations (diagram 4).



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

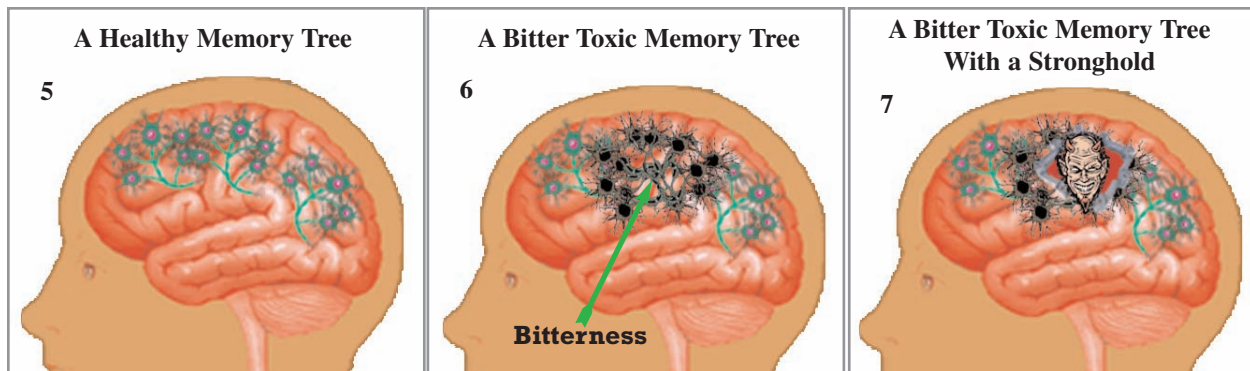


Diagram 5 illustrates a brain that has been filled with healthy memories. But what if an unhealthy memory tree takes root, such as bitterness? As that person goes through life, other bitter memories continue to get added to the bitter tree (diagram 6). This ever-enlarging propensity to retain bitter memories produces an adverse motivation in the brain that hurts relationships. As Scripture states, *“a root of bitterness defiles many.”* Long after the original event that precipitated the initial bitterness, other relationships are being contaminated by it. And a detrimental effect takes place within the brain:

The bitter memory tree occupies specific space within the cortex. In that area of the brain the bitter memories block out any possible healthy memories from forming. The longer the bitter memory tree remains and grows, the more forcefully it prevents healthy memories from taking root and influencing the responses of that person.

For example, a young boy develops bitterness toward his father but doesn't resolve that negative motivation until he becomes a man. During those years in which the bitter memory tree remained, it prevented healthy character qualities from developing, such as humility, deference, generosity, mercy, submission to correction, and even interconnectedness with and trust in other people.

In essence, the deeply ingrained neural

pathways of bitterness prevented healthy memories and motives from developing. So even if the bitterness is resolved years later, important healthy memories and positive character qualities *didn't* emerge because they were blocked out by the influence of bitterness. And the person held captive by bitterness isn't even aware of what he or she has missed! The absence of the positive character qualities degrades the quality of current relationships which would have been blessed by them. This inability to bless others is the second part of the defilement of bitterness, which is the most prevalent toxic memory plaguing Christians today.

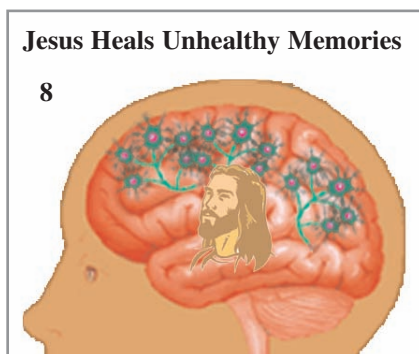
Another detrimental effect on the brain that's brought on by bitterness is the formation of a demonic stronghold around the bitter memories (diagram 7). A stronghold intensifies the relational defilement of bitterness because the demonic presence will:

- 1) **control, dictate, and influence the person's attitudes and behavior;**
- 2) **oppress and discourage them;**
- 3) **filter and color how they view or react to situations, circumstances, or other people.**

Keep in mind that not all toxic memories are bitter. Any number of sinful sources that defy God's Word, such as sexual impurity, pride, rebellion, fear and insecurity will block healthy memory trees from forming.

“Surely you heard of [Christ] and were taught in Him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds, and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.” (Ephesians 4:21-24).

By God’s grace, through the power of the indwelling Spirit of Christ toxic motivations can be healed and changed! This is encouraging for anyone who has been raised without the righteous standards and instructions of God’s Law. Through intentional study and determination to put His ways into practice through the Spirit of Jesus, unhealthy toxic motivations can be made healthy and become Christ-like (diagram 8). And when motives are healthy, behaviors and attitudes follow suit.



If you’re a grandparent, a pattern of godly living can begin with you if wickedness entered your family through you or was passed along in your family through previous generations. You can begin the process of creating a heritage of ***collective wisdom of God’s Word*** for your family. Our Lord makes this promise to those who love Him and obey His commands:

*We will not hide [God’s ways] from their children; we will **tell the next generation** the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, His power, and the wonders He has done. He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which He commanded our forefathers to **teach their children**, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would **tell their children**. Then they would **put their trust in God** and would not forget His deeds but would **keep His commands**”* (Psalms 78:4-7).

The same fruit of children and grandchildren who love Jesus as Lord of their life and live according to His commands with grateful trust can be yours and your family’s *if* you’ll cooperate with His Spirit and make His righteous laws *your* way of life. The process of changing toxic memories into healthy ones is this:

- **Learning and applying God’s Word to your everyday life, modeling His love and obedience for your children;**
- **Turning in trust to the power of the Spirit of Jesus to heal your unhealthy toxic memories;**
- **Humbly asking forgiveness of those you’ve hurt by giving way to the negative responses agitated by unhealthy memories.**

Toxic memories may never be completely forgotten, but by God’s grace they can lose their sting and be changed. In fact, the toxic chemical makeup of a memory can actually be altered and made healthy. Earlier we discussed the responsibilities of husbands, wives and children to one another within the family. But, consider what grandparents can do to help their progeny live responsibly with-

in God's laws and help heal their memories!

If you're a grandparent and *haven't* established for your family the *collective wisdom of God's Word*, it's never too late to repent and ask forgiveness from God and from them. While you still live, you can be leading the way in helping your family live responsibly, and one day experience the joy of sharing eternity with them.

Please, *make real* your love for your children and their children by humbling yourself. Begin to take responsibility for the biblical foundations of love-grounded obedient trust in Jesus that you failed to instill in them. It's time for you to lead the way heading for the narrow gate.