

## Living Without A Grudge By Refusing To Remember Past Wrongs

Dear Friends in Christ Jesus our Lord,

While we were working to combine the individual chapters of our semi-fictional *Kingdom Living Today* series into one document several weeks ago, the Spirit of our Lord inspired us to write down specific anecdotes of how He has guided us the past 45 years. Attached you'll find the first in a new series entitled *Kingdom Living Today Addenda: Saga 1, Under The Lordship Of Jesus Your Life Is Stitches In A Divine Fabric*. Kingdom Living Today Addenda are the saga of two ordinary people who by grace have loved, obeyed and served our Lord Jesus as children of our heavenly Father. Each Addendum reveals our Lord's divine involvement in our lives – revealing His life lessons for us in our character transformation as well as His Spirit's use of us to be His blessing to others. Our hope is that they'll inspire your own spiritual walk and that you'll reflect on where you have experienced times when our Lord's Spirit was specifically guiding or empowering you.

***"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).

In our previous email we presented a chart which reveals how to turn bitterness into blessing. We're including the chart again because of an event that happened recently. We've been praying for several years for a couple who live next door to our friend in Oregon. During that time the wife has been fighting several forms of cancer which have now metastasized. Her husband, a very bitter man, is angry at God for offenses committed by Christians against his grandfather decades ago. Several weeks ago during our prayer walks on the The Emmaus Way, the Spirit told us repeatedly that our Father's grace was keeping the wife alive so the husband would finally take up his bitterness with Him. In His grace Father wanted to give both of them several months of joy together *if* the husband would repent and forgive from his heart the people from his past, most of whom were now deceased.

### Turning **Bitterness** to **Blessing**

#### *Comparison of the Hebraic and Nicolaitan Approaches*

[From Lesson 31 of *Discussing How to Restore the Early Church*]

**Hebraic:** The Bible mandates that you forgive from your heart *without exception*; to belong to Jesus *is* to forgive. Forgiveness gets you out of *negative* territory on the chart to '0'. The emotional healing accomplished by Jesus occurs as you enter *positive* territory through prayer for, and good deeds toward, the one who has hurt you. The further a forgiving person goes into positive territory, the less likely that bitterness will return.

<b>Unforgiveness</b>					<b>Forgiveness</b>					<b>Blessing</b>										
-100	-90	-80	-70	-60	-50	-40	-30	-20	-10	0	+10	+20	+30	+40	+50	+60	+70	+80	+90	+100
seething bitterness, hatred, begrudging, resentment										prayer for, compassion, acts of love and kindness										

**Nicolaitanism:** Forgiveness is optional, and bitterness is seldom confronted; past circumstances such as "*abuse*" and "*dysfunctional family*" are cited as grounds for not forgiving. The unforgiving arrogantly believe their offender has to ask forgiveness first. Few even get back to '0'; those who do usually return to negative territory—unforgiveness.

Last week we were in Oregon visiting our friend. The husband next door avoided spending any time with us, so Mike told the wife the message the Holy Spirit had given us about them. She responded that her husband's ongoing bitterness has been grieving her a lot. But when we added that he needed to take up his bitterness with Father God, she replied, "He's okay with God — he believes He exists." Her words broke our hearts since we know that our Father, without exception, doesn't forgive people who won't forgive others. (See Matthew 6:14,15.)

We cite the issue of bitterness with you because, in our experience, bitterness is the most prevalent sin in Christendom — and no one is willing to confront it. Bitterness is the #1 reason why people whom religious leaders may declare "saved" don't receive the indwelling Holy Spirit. As we've written in our article, ***The Gospel of the Covenant Is The Pilgrimage To Salvation***:

"Unforgiveness, that is, unresolved bitterness, is the most common factor that keeps our Father from consummating the New Covenant. A bitter person is like a bride on the day of her wedding who tells her groom, "Honey, I'm a prostitute and I'm going to continue my profession. I refuse to give it up. Will you still marry me?" The spiritual adultery that is manifested by clinging to bitterness is just as vile! A bitter person shows no evidence of the Holy Spirit operating as a "stream of living water" (see John 7:38). Our Father doesn't need "streams of bitter water" representing Him in this world. A person who clings to unforgiveness has failed to appreciate how much he or she needed to be forgiven through the shed blood of Jesus."

You can recognize many of those within Christianity who are beset by ongoing bitterness by this distinction: Instead of lives that are guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit, they keep studying the Bible more and more, and feel good that they know so many facts about God. While they have a lot to say about what they've read, they're usually silent about Jesus being involved in their lives. Many stay blind to their bitterness because they use "church" programs and activities to mask the emotional pain that keeps gnawing at them. But what they don't realize is that their bitterness defiles other people who had nothing to do with what caused their pain. The most common defilement of bitterness is that bitter people can never fully meet the emotional needs of those who have a right to expect emotional support from them. And when someone remains mired in their bitterness, the love of Jesus can never flow through them for their spouse, their family or their friends. The bitter within Christianity delight Satan — "Christians" defile others with their bitterness even as they are defaming our Lord Jesus by their attitudes.

In our workbook, ***Demolishing Strongholds*** we discuss possible symptoms of bitterness. A bitter person may harbor a few or many of these symptoms:

- Resentment** Continuous animosity or hard feelings against someone (Leviticus 19:17)
- Racism** Unjust narrow-mindedness; prejudice against whatever differs from your values or beliefs; aversion to another gender or race or ethnic group (Proverbs 18:3)
- Unforgiveness** Inability to emotionally release someone who has hurt you (Matthew 18:34,35)
- Anger/Hatred** Feelings of wrath or rage; intense animosity (Ecclesiastes 7:9)
- Begrudging** Seething hatred toward someone who is unaware of your bitterness; speaking badly about someone behind their back; withholding affection and warmth that's due someone (Ezekiel 35:11)
- Vengeful** Desire for retaliation (Acts 16:19-23)
- Chronic Grumbling** Ongoing complaint or murmuring that reveals deep discontent (James 5:9)
- Presumptuous** Precipitated by unfulfilled expectations; acting outside God's will and reaping painful consequences (Acts 19:13-16)

You may notice that several of these symptoms depict the same negative attitudes that are exhibited by the Far Right within Christianity. We strongly encourage you to make sure that none of these symptoms apply to you. If they do, repent and forgive those against whom you hold these! And if you need more help in staying free of bitterness, prayerfully read and discuss Chapter 13 of *Demolishing Strongholds*, *Do This After You've Demolished The Strongholds*.

If you find yourself plagued by feelings of resentment, anger, and/or bitterness toward another individual or group of people, know this one truth: Our Father will not change your circumstances until you let go of unChrist-like attitudes toward these people and willingly pray blessings on them. You'll stew in your negativity until you forgive from your heart, repenting if necessary.

Finally, no matter what any religious leaders have told you, take God's Word as truth: "For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins" (Matthew 6:14,15; see also Ephesians 4:31; James 3:14; 1John 1:5-10). Our Father offers no exception for anyone to hold onto bitterness and unforgiveness against anyone. By their very attitude those who remain bitter and unforgiving deny the cost that our Lord Jesus paid for them on the cross. Get hold of this. You don't want to show up at the Judgment Throne entertaining even the slightest bitterness against someone for whom our Lord died.

If you're free of bitterness and find yourself even *tempted* to be bitter toward someone, use that temptation to prompt you to pray for that person. We call this having a "prayer target." A prayer target is taking a temptation and using it to pray on behalf of a particular person, even the one you are remembering with negative thoughts. Having prayer targets has kept us both out of the malignancy of bitterness that has permeated so many within Christianity and has been ignored or tolerated or even fanned into flame for so long.

**Mike & Sue**

P.S. We'd deeply appreciate your prayers on Mike's behalf. We know that Father is well aware of the pain he goes through each day, and that His Spirit enables Mike to still be used to bless others through these messages. Since he was diagnosed with Afib last November, the VA is having a very hard time finding any meds that will help him without side effects such as depression, pain and sleeplessness. While he'd love to be face to face with our Lord Jesus, he knows that Father continues to keep him this side of eternity to fulfill His purposes. We realize that you may not understand the effects of Agent Orange on veterans which our government used in Vietnam, nor the Gulf War Syndrome which plagues those affected by the oil field fires that Saddam Hussein set in Kuwait as his troops fled in defeat.

It's been a challenge for the VA to help the vets who keep suffering from these poisons, since no one understands precisely how the human body is altered by them. As veterans age, medications that work well for the rest of the population don't seem to be nearly as effective, and/or the side effects are much worse. A while back Mike was discussing with a VA pharmacist the many medications he has tried over the years which hadn't helped. She told him that his list of meds was actually short compared to those of other Vietnam vets. Our hearts are saddened by this reality. Many of the vets who have been affected by Agent Orange don't get old and die, they just keep rotting on the insides. Please pray!