

“Bitterness”

This lesson, and all *topical* ones especially, should attempt to answer some basic questions:

1. **What is “it”?** (identified by definition and by biblical example)
2. **What causes “it”?** Is there a *root cause(s)*?
3. **Why is “it” a problem / to what else does it lead?**
4. **If “it” is a problem for me, how do I deal with it constructively?** In other words, **how do I get rid of it?**

What is “bitterness” by definition?

- It is translated basically from these Greek words:

pikrós [bitter], *pikría* [bitterness], *pikraínō* [to embitter], *parapikraínō* [to embitter], *parapikrasmós* [rebellion]

- The base word, *pikros* means:

“pointed,” “sharp” (e.g., arrows), then “penetrating” (e.g., a smell), then “painful” (to the feelings), and “bitter” (to the taste). The sense of bitterness yields such transferred senses as “unpleasant,” “unexpected,” “painful,” “severe,” “cruel,” “stern,” “embittered.” *pikría* has the meaning “severity” or “bitterness,” *pikraínō* means “to provoke,” and the deponent *pikraínomai* means “to become angry, bitter.” ([Theological Dictionary of the New Testament](#); by G. Kittel; p.839-840)

What is “bitterness” by example?

- These passages highlight bitterness:

-Ruth 1:2-21, Naomi

Naomi left her home in Bethlehem (because of famine) for Moab with her husband and two sons, vv.1-2.

In Moab, her husband Elimelech died, v.3.

Her sons took Moabite wives, v.4.

Both sons then died in Moab, v.5.

When the famine was over, she arose with her daughters-in-law to return to Judah, vv.6-7.

Along the way, she implored them to return to their homeland and find new husbands, vv.8-13.

Orpah returned as asked, but Ruth “*clung*” to Naomi and refused to depart, vv.14-18.

Upon arrival in Bethlehem, Naomi said that they should no longer call her “Naomi” (pleasant), but instead “Mara” (bitterness), vv.19-21.

What is “bitterness” by example?

-Job 7:1-21, Job

Job lost virtually everything, **cf. 1:1-19**.

Satan eventually even destroyed his health, **2:6-8**.

Even his wife told him to “*curse God and die*”, **2:9**.

Initially, after he lost his possessions and children, he “*worshipped*”, **1:20**.

Even after his own body was touched by Satan, he remained faithful in his words, **2:10**.

However, after seven days of suffering, he did curse the day he was born, **cf. 3:1-26**.

After enduring accusations from his friends, who said he was suffering because of his sin, Job became *bitter*, **7:1-21**.

What causes “bitterness”?

From the two examples, Naomi and Job, it appears that **circumstances** cause bitterness. Do you **agree**, or **disagree**? Why?

Are there examples of others who suffered comparably but did not become bitter?

>Paul, **2Cor.11:23 – 12:9** > **12:10**; **Phil.3:7-14**;
4:11-13

>Apostles, **Acts 5:40** > **41-42**

>Persecuted saints, **Acts 8:1-4**; **11:19**; **Heb. 11:13-16,35b**

But, if bitterness is not caused by circumstance, then what is its cause?

Does bitterness have a “root” (cause)?

The “**root of bitterness**” to which Heb. 12:15 refers is one which produces “**trouble, and by it many be defiled.**”

But to borrow from the phrase, what is the *root* cause(s) of bitterness?

>lack of faith/trust, 1Pet.2:23; Ps.25:1-3

>too much of self, Phil.2:5-8 > v.9-18

>carnality, 1Cor.3:1-3; Col.3:1-8

>unwillingness to forgive, Eph.4:31-32

What might be some other causes
bitterness?

Why is *bitterness* a problem, or to what else might it lead?

Obviously, it is sinful alone, [Eph.4:31](#).

A bitter *disposition* can certainly produce *bitter* or *harsh* words, [Rom.3:14](#).

And certainly, a *bitter disposition* can lead to sinful anger and other sinful actions, [Eph.4:31](#).

But what shouldn't be overlooked is that *bitterness* can produce *apathy*- and thereby cause us to sit idle when we ought to be working, [Jonah!](#)

It likewise can lead to *jealousy*, *selfish ambition*, *arrogance*, and *hypocrisy*, [Jas.3:11-16](#).

What might be some other problems to which bitterness might lead?

If *bitterness* is a problem for me, how do I deal with it constructively?

In other words, how do I get rid of it....

If it is caused by someone's mistreatment of you?

>Learn to love biblically, [1Cor.13:5,7.](#)

>Learn to forgive, [Eph.4:31](#) > [v.32.](#)

>Learn to be *transformed* rather than *conforming*, and learn to think properly regarding self, [Rom.12:1-3](#) > [Phil.2:3-4.](#)

But what if someone else is not the source?

If *bitterness* is a problem for me, how do I deal with it constructively?

In other words, how do I get rid of it....

if it is caused by unfortunate or tragic circumstances in life?

- > Learn to count blessings, not “problems,” Psalm 40:5.
- > Learn to focus on spiritual, rather than physical things, Col.3:1-3; Phil.3:19-20; Matt.6:8-13.
- > Learn that: (a) God never promised that *this life* would fair or pleasant; and (b) if it were both of these, would we truly *long for* heaven? 2Cor.5:1-9; 1Pet.4:12-13.

**Our next study, beginning next
Wednesday evening, will be:**

“Selfishness”

taught by Bro. Jeff Hancock

