

empathise with her needs and care for her. Once God has forgiven your bitterness, you can then begin to love your wife as Christ loves you by seeking to meet her needs.

- 2) Take time to think about the many times, often daily, that you grieve the Lord and the Holy Spirit. God does not become bitter with you. Instead, He works in you to help you overcome your sinful ways. That is love. That is what you must seek to do for your relationship.
- 3) True selfless love for your wife will enable you to overlook many of the little irritating things that she does. I believe that is why God prefaced the command, "*and be not bitter against them*" with "*husbands love your wives.*" The Apostle Peter wrote, (1 Peter 4:8) "*And above all things have fervent charity [love] among yourselves: for charity shall cover [hides] the multitude of sins.*" Sacrificial love will hide imperfections in your spouse. (Romans 12:17) "*Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest [good] in the sight of all men.*" (Romans 12:18) "*If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*" (Romans 12:21) "*Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*"
- 4) Loving your wife biblically will prevent you from being a selfish, harsh, demanding, dictator, who tramples on her feelings. You will be patient with her and help her to grow without being unreasonable.

📖 *Lord willing, next week we will continue from here.*

Conclusion: Though God addressed husbands regarding bitterness, we have noted that wives struggle with it as well. If you are bitter toward your spouse, and you will ask God to help you follow the steps we are outlining, you can pull the roots of bitterness from your heart and rejuvenate your marriage. Do not ignore bitterness. If you need help, come and see me.

Song: Have Thine Own Way - 388

Bitter-free Love Pt.2

5 September 2021 AM – Colossians 3:18-19 – Marriage – Scott Childs

Introduction: Australia's tallest tree, named Centurion, located in Tasmania, has just been measured at 100.9 m tall. That gigantic tree, like all other trees, began with a tiny seed.

The same is true of bitterness. It begins in a marriage as a tiny seed, and if left unchecked, it will grow into a huge conflict. Bitterness has destroyed millions of marriages. One marriage author wrote, "**Bitterness, I believe, is the number one killer of our marriages.**" (Paul Bucknell) Because every husband and wife has a sin nature, bitterness is a threat to every marriage. Therefore, God gave us Colossians 3:18-19.

Transition: Last week, we learned that the wife's role is a type of the church. She is to submit to her husband and give him respect, as the church does to Christ. The husband's role is a type of Christ. He is to love sacrificially and lead his wife as Christ loved sacrificially and leads the church. This morning we are going to begin working through the command "*be not bitter against them*" and identify the first two steps that can help us conquer bitterness. Next week we will continue.

Read Slowly! Husbands, when your wife does something that irritates you, and you get upset inside, you may stop talking to her, avoid her, treat her harshly, or wish to get even with her; that is the bitter feeling that God is condemning. **Wives** often struggle with the same problem.

You may wonder, "**Why is bitterness wrong?**" It is wrong because God condemns it in our text. It is wrong because it does not address the problem biblically. Bitter hearts are unforgiving. Bitterness will grow and potentially destroy your marriage. **What are we to do?**

The first step to conquering bitterness is to ...

1. Identify all Seeds of Bitterness in your Heart

a. To do this, you must understand bitterness.

- 1) Bitterness is angry resentment harboured in the heart because of unkind treatment or unfulfilled expectations. Bitterness is anger that you swept under the rug instead of taking care of it properly.
- 2) The seed of bitterness begins when your spouse does something that irritates you. Most of the time it is not

intentional. These irritations fall into several categories.

- a) **Habitual** – careless acts like leaving the door open, leaving a drawer open, not hanging up the towel, not taking care of dirty clothes, walking in with dirty feet, etc.
 - b) **Accidental** – spilling, breaking, damaging something this is mine, over-sleeping, forgetfulness, etc.
 - c) **Personal** – being slow, being late, squeezing the toothpaste different from me, being a sloppy housekeeper, serving meals late, body odour, etc.
 - d) **Unthoughtful** – careless spending, being too busy to spend quality time with you, too much time on the phone
 - e) **Unavoidable** – sickness, exhaustion
 - f) **Sinful** - nagging, disinterest in intimacy, sharp or unkind words, a controlling attitude, lack of appreciation, an unforgiving spirit, anger, unwillingness to communicate, etc. The list is endless.
- 3) Seven J. Cole states, “[Bitterness] takes root when you focus on the sins or shortcomings of your wife. Behind it is the disappointment of unmet expectations. It expresses itself by embittered anger, vindictiveness, or being cross or harsh.” If you often argue, you are probably bitter.
- 4) It is good to remember that your wife is more likely to irritate you if you are selfish, harsh and overbearing.
- 5) Any resentment or irritation in the heart toward your wife is a seed of bitterness that builds pressure. Each irritation is like blowing another puff of air into a balloon. Unless you release the pressure, in time it will explode.

b. You must consciously identify each irritation

- 1) Make a written list of everything your spouse does that irritates you. Note how each offence has irritated you.
- 2) **Admit** that each of these irritations has planted a seed of bitterness in your heart. **This is tough!** If you say, “I’m not bitter, it just bugs me when my wife does ___”, you are deceiving yourself. The devil wants you to justify yourself

and blame your wife. Remember that most of your spouse’s irritating acts are not sinful. Even if they are, bitterness is wrong. **Stop blaming and admit the truth.** Your irritations **are** bitterness! You cannot control how your spouse treats you, but you **can** control how you respond. God wants us to **act biblically** and not **react carnally**. Becoming bitter is acting carnally.

The second step to conquering bitterness is to ...

2. Remove all Roots of Bitterness from your Heart

When we want to remove weeds from our garden, we must pull them out by the roots. The same is true of bitterness. Here are four tools that will help.

a. 1st tool to remove bitterness is Confession

- 1) Confess to God that your bitterness is sin. (1 John 1:9) “*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*”
- 2) Agree with God that bitterness will always hurt your walk with Him and your relationship with your spouse.
- 3) Ask God to change your heart instead of focussing on your wife’s need to change.
- 4) Stop blaming your wife for the way you feel, and ask God to help you pull all the roots of bitterness from your heart. Be willing to let go of every irritation.
- 5) Obey God’s commands in Ephesians 4:31-32. “*Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.*” Take time to ponder those verses carefully. **With God’s help, stop being bitter toward your wife. Ask God to enable you to be kind, tender and forgiving.**
- 6) Once God has forgiven your bitterness, He will give you the grace to remove it from your heart and marriage.

b. 2nd tool to remove bitterness is Love

- 1) Our text (Col 3:19) commands, “*Husbands love your wives.*” We learned from Ephesians 5, that husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church. He is to lead lovingly, sacrifice to meet her needs, seek to edify her,