



Meeting Notes: “I See Me” – Bitter or Better (November 13, 2013)

These notes capture our November 13, 2013 meeting. We opened our meeting in prayer and then began our evening. Our Raising Godly Women (RGW) leader did a refresher teaching on Bitterness; she had previously shared this teaching with the daughters in March. Topic notes from the evening may not be in the order discussed during group, and they are not intended to cover everything discussed. They are intended as highlights to capture the essence of our evening. General notes follow each topic that was discussed.

CURRENT VISION: “The Year of Maturity: Learning how to hear with ears of faith that we may be hearers of the word and not doers only.” Scripture Reference: **Mark 4:24.**

Discussion Topic: “I See Me” – Bitter or Better

- **Drinking Poison and Expecting Someone Else to Die.** Our teacher was wearing a sign around her neck that said “Bitterness – Drinking poison and expecting someone else to die.” She then read a story based on this principle (first attachment). **Takeaway.** Bitterness is a spiritual poison that affects us, not the other person we are bitter towards!
- **Exercise.** We were asked the question, “On a scale of 1 – 10, how happy are you in this current season?” The results and the purpose of the exercise will be explained later.
- **Discussion:** The notes used for the discussion are attached; however, here are some key points:
 - **Is anger a sin?** The emotion of anger is not a sin, but it can lead to behavior (even in our thoughts) that is sinful.
 - **Combustible arrows.** Combustible arrows inflame our emotions, but they also identify vulnerable areas in our armor.¹
 - **Releasing the debt.** When we feel like others owe us something (even an apology), we hold that person in debt to us, which leads to unforgiveness. Unforgiveness (like bitterness) is a cancer eating at us slowly from the inside out. Moreover, demons thrive in unforgiveness and bitterness! However, when we forgive, we release that person of anything we believe they owe us, thereby freeing us both. **Takeaway.** Unforgiveness and bitterness are synonymous, and the only way to get rid

¹ For more information on the devil’s arrows, see the Meeting Notes entitled, “Shield of Faith – Part 3” (August 14, 2013 on the website: www.wow2women.com).

of either is to release others of debts we feel they owe us.

- **Root of bitterness.** Bitterness is described as a root because it's buried underneath the surface and springs up as other things, like anger. Consequently, we have to dig into our heart to find where the root originates, especially since our childhood wounds can create a root of bitterness. However, the Holy Spirit and God's Word can heal us! We will know we are healed when others see the change in us! **Takeaway.** Others may not be able to look at us and see a root of bitterness, but they can surely see our behavior, which is the fruit thereof!
- **Victim or victor?** We cannot be a victim and be victorious at the same time, so why are we calling ourselves a victim when we are victorious in Christ Jesus? Thus, we may not be able to forgive others in our own power, but we can forgive them through the power of Christ! Therefore, we can either be bitter or better, or we can be venomous (poisoning others) or a victor (blessing others). **Takeaway.** We have a choice!
- **Generational impact.** We can pass bitterness on to our children and their children, and their children, and so on!
- **Resolving bitterness.** Bitter people tend to look for comfort rather than correction. However, we discussed several choices we can make in order to overcome bitterness (second attachment, point D). We also discussed learning how to attack the problem, not the person, because this truly is a spiritual battle! **Takeaway.** The day we said yes to Jesus was the day we stepped into a battle! We can let the battle embitter or strengthen us!
- **Concluding the Exercise.** Our answers ranged from 3 to 8. We were asked if bitterness is why we were not at 10, and the consensus was yes. Yet, in Christ, we have the ability to live at a 10, and unless we're there, we are not living at our best. However, there are strangers waiting on us to heal, so they can hear our testimony! **Takeaway.** Strive to live at a 10 giving God nothing but our best and receiving nothing but His best, for others are depending on us to get healed, so they can hear our testimony!

Homework Assignments:

- **Memory verses.** Please continue to work on all the memory verses: **Psalm 33:4, Psalm 51:6, Hebrews 11:1, 6, 2 Corinthians 10:4-6, and Mark 4:24.** The more we sow the Word in our hearts, the more it will help reveal and push out the lies the enemy uses to torment us.

Next Meeting: We will have our final 2013 Social during our next meeting. The following week, we will be off for Thanksgiving. The first week in December, we will have our final 2013 Night of Prayer and then break for the holidays.

Closing: We closed our meeting in prayer with a time of need-specific prayer for the challenges that were lifted up, for the group overall, and as the Holy Spirit led.

If you have questions, comments, or concerns about information contained in this document, or would like to be added to or removed from the email distribution for the meeting notes, please email us at wow2@wow2women.com or complete a Contact Form on our site www.wow2women.com.



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(November 13, 2013)

ATTACHMENT: Drinking poison and hoping someone else dies²

For a long time I could feel my joy slipping away slowly. Without realizing why, I could sense a lethargy, sloth, and melancholy slipping over my life. I couldn't figure out why either. Only in the last few months has that begun to change, and now I've been experiencing more and more joy.

I've learned to forgive.

Now, I didn't think that I'd been withholding forgiveness from anyone. But, forgiveness has become so much more real, more tangible. *Everywhere* (read: EVERYWHERE) in my life where I could feel some bitterness or melancholy, I recognized that I had a feeling that I was "owed something." Call it what we will: holding a grudge, being owed a debt, requiring an apology, etc, this begins to affect our entire lives little by little, without our realizing it. "A little yeast leavens the whole lump of dough." (**Galatians 5:9**)

Everywhere in my life where I felt I was owed something and would not forgive by *truly* releasing someone's debt, I would feel melancholy or even resentful.

It was time to release those debts. No matter how wronged I was by others, unforgiveness was now a cancer that was eating at ME slowly from the inside out. I had to let go of that feeling that I was owed something.

For me, I could quickly see three relationships that were eating at me because I felt owed something for how I had been hurt. But now my lack of forgiveness (still holding on to this feeling that they "owed me" some debt) was creeping into *every area of my life* and making my whole existence less joyful. It was time to let those debts go. I am not owed anything by them anymore.

And then another, and deeper, realization occurred. I do the same thing to the Church. I almost never feel that I am "owed anything" by non-Christians. But Christians! They should behave a certain way! I expect them to follow Christ and his example!

"Now of course they don't owe ME that debt! But they DO owe Jesus!"

No. He canceled our debt. I must let go of that expectation too. Jesus would never let the cancer of unforgiveness eat at him. Thank God that I can release those debts and be free from that cancer and bitterness that comes from holding debts over others. I can drop all my expectations of the Church.

It is a life-changing realization that **forgiving everyone for everything** frees us from bitterness, anger, resentment, and melancholy. My brother heard unforgiveness described as "drinking poison and hoping it kills the other person." It doesn't make sense and only hurts us.

Forgiving someone means that they don't owe you anything anymore. No one is indebted to you. Life is not indebted to you. Let go of that grudge or sense of entitlement.

Root out all melancholy and bitterness from your life!

Forgive everyone for everything!

² Bryan. Dust in the Wind of God (October 1, 2011). Retrieved from <http://dustinthewind10314.blogspot.com/2011/10/drinking-poison-and-hoping-someone-else.html>



ATTACHMENT: The Choice is YOURS: Bitter or better? Venom or victor?

"Bitterness" – It poisons the spirit of the bitter one; holding on to or showing feelings of intense hatred, anger, resentment or vindictiveness [wanting to get back at someone]. -- merciless, unforgiving, holding a grudge; feelings resulting from something that is difficult to accept.

As an adjective, the word "bitter" means "sharp like an arrow or pungent to the taste, disagreeable; venomous."

In its figurative sense, "bitterness" refers to a mental or emotional state that corrodes or "eats away at."

BITTERNESS IS A ROOT

Hebrews 12:15 - See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no root of bitterness springs up to cause trouble and defile many.

A root is a source, or a bubbling fountain that is lying under the surface. Roots do not directly manifest or make themselves known, but are a source of fuel for other elements that are on the surface. You don't usually see a plant showing off its root system, but if the plant didn't have a root system it wouldn't survive.

Not everyone can see the root system of YOUR bitterness of soul because it's hidden under the surface. But out of it springs up anger and other negative emotions against others and against the circumstances around you. People who have a root of bitterness find it easy to get upset over things that others are doing around them.

Many of us are in bondage today because of what was done to us years ago especially those who were abused. That's how the demonic spirits gain access into a person's life. It's not the abuse, but the bitterness and unhealthy feelings that build up within a person who has been taken advantage of.

Demons thrive on bitterness and unforgiveness. It's a wide open door for them to move right in on a person and develop many spiritual, mental, and even physical bondages.

A. The Symptoms of a bitter spirit

Proverbs 14:10 reminds us - The heart knows its own bitterness. So even though we may not share it, we know why we are bitter. What lies behind the symptoms? The lies of Satan are behind the symptoms.

1. A negative, complaining attitude toward life. Job who cried out in **Job 7:11** - I will complain in the bitterness of my soul. Behind grumbling, complaining, and a negative attitude lies a soul that is angry at his lot in life and at God. Your whole personality and character may be infected with the poison of bitterness.
2. Cannot seem to love or be loved. **Colossians 3:19** pits two opposite truths against each other as conflicting alternatives in a marriage. It says, Husbands love your wives but do not be bitter against them. In other words, if you really love, you can't be bitter and if you are really bitter you cannot love. The man or the woman who cannot love or refuses to be loved often suffers from a bitter spirit.
3. Sees God as unapproachable and unavailable. In the midst of his anger, Job cried out in **Job 23:2** - I am bitter, how I wish I could find God. In other words, Job is saying, "I wish God were available so that I could argue my case and He could see that I am right." The bitter heart may pray but it all seems so distant, so impersonal.

- 4 Wears a mask of self-righteousness. **James 3:14** says - Here is the worst possible kind of life, to brag about your goodness while harboring a bitter spirit. Bitterness often seeks religious clothes to wear. It loves to surround itself with activity to prove its worth to God enough to solidify its basis for bitterness.
- 5 A bitter spirit left unchecked may well lead to thoughts of suicide. **Job** had to deal with that in **Job 3:20**. He questions God, Why does God leave us alive? To suffer in our bitterness? Even if a man's bitterness does not lead to thoughts of physical self-destruction, the end is spiritual self-destruction to be sure.

Other possible symptoms of a bitter spirit

| | |
|---|---|
| Sarcasm | Health issues (ulcers, high blood pressure, etc.) |
| Unable to see the wrong in what you are doing | Lack of enduring relationships |
| Trouble with the law | Association with bitter people |
| Unwilling to submit to those in authority | Judging or critical spirit |
| Emotionally withdrawn, quiet | Vindictive (want to get revenge) |
| Slanderer/gossiper | Oversensitive to innocent comments |
| Extreme sadness/sorrow | Apathetic "I don't care" disposition |
| Lack of joy | Mask to cover pain |
| Lack of peace | Sleep a lot |
| Holds hurt feelings in side | Paranoia |
| Hard to please | Fatigue |
| Inflicts harm to self | Gluttony/Overeat |
| Impatient | Alcoholism |
| Untrusting | Substance abuse |
| Self pity ("woe is me" disposition) | Trouble operating in spiritual gifts |
| Unforgiving even with little things | Shopaholic |
| Unruly temper/deep seated anger | Addictions |
| Rebellious | |

B. Sources of a bitter spirit. (How did I get here?)

HURT must be dealt with scripturally or it will become ANGER.

Anger must be dealt with scripturally or if not resolved, it will become BITTERNESS.

Is anger a sin? No, it is what you do with your anger that determines whether or not you have crossed over into the sin zone. Be angry and sin not. **Ephesians 4:26**

Unhealed hurt leads to anger.

Unchecked anger leads to bitterness.

Possible sources of bitterness

| | |
|---|--|
| Death | Divorce |
| School troubles (poor grades, bullying, unpopular, doesn't fit in) | Emotionally unavailable parent |
| Unfulfilled promises by loved ones | Abuse (physical, sexual, or emotional) |
| Discrimination (age, sex, race, weight, speech, religious, disability, pay, height) | Non-affirming words (you are dumb, ugly, won't ever be anything in life) |
| Feel misunderstood, dishonored, rejected, unloved, overlooked, and undervalued | Victim of gossip/slander |
| Feel unjustly accused or judged | Unsuccessful in pleasing people |
| Feel like God didn't/doesn't care about what happened to you | Failure to create meaningful relationships |
| False or unrealistic expectations of someone | Loneliness |
| Breakup of friendship/relationship | Parents didn't teach how to effectively deal with anger |
| Fatherlessness/motherlessness | Poverty |

C. Fruits of the root of bitterness (The results of a bitter spirit)

1. Defilement - **Hebrews 12:15** - Your heart and life is contaminated before God. You become unclean before God. Sin abides in your heart. Many times, your bitterness spreads to others and keeps the other from coming to Christ. This is especially true where there are bitter parents. They tend to produce bitter children.
2. Division - **Proverbs 18:19** - It divides the bitter person from fellowship with God, family, friends and drives away the ones who love us the most. Cain in Genesis 3 is a good example. Surely he and his family missed the closeness of each other's company all because he became bitter. **Ephesians 4** is not referring to blasphemy against God or merely slander against men, but to any speech springing from anger and designed to wound or injure others.
3. Deadness to the Holy Spirit and the Things of God - Bitterness controls and consumes the heart and keeps the bitter one from sensing the presence of God. **Ephesians 4:30-31** shows that these things including bitterness "grieve the Holy Spirit."
4. Deception - Many times, you cannot see where you are wrong and you feel justified to be bitter.
5. Depression - You live in mental anguish and are consumed with the object of your bitterness. Not all depression comes from bitterness, but all bitterness has a measure of depression.
6. Delirium - (madness) A bitter person carries a certain amount of anger into the bitter stage. That is why **Ephesians 4: 30-31** mentions all the other kindred attitudes: bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil speaking and malice.
7. Distraction - You can't fellowship or pray with the Lord without thinking about the source of the bitterness. You can't listen quietly and contently to the Word of God without thinking of the source of bitterness. You can't live a prosperous Christian life with the fruit of the Holy Spirit described in **Galatians 5:22-23**
8. Bitterness sometimes determines destiny, and instead of being broken and Born Again, the bitter one is bound in the chains of sin and sorrow.

(Sources used: <http://www.holybiblesays.org/articles.php?ID=411> and <http://www.greatbiblestudy.com/bitterness.php>)

D. Dealing with unchecked anger/overcoming bitterness

The Bible teaches us to "get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice (desire to do harm)." It then goes on to tell us how to deal with such bitterness and its fruits by being "kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (**Ephesians 4:31-32**).

→In order to overcome bitterness, you must first learn to deal with anger/offense constructively. YOU must make some choices right up front!

1. Choose not to sin – In your anger, do not sin (**Ephesians 4:26**)
2. Choose to be self controlled – when you feel anger rising up, it's the perfect time to see if you really do possess the fruit of the spirit, self control (**Galatians 5:22-23**)
3. Choose to be quiet and listen. DO NOT respond immediately. (**James 1:19-20**)

Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.

4. Choose your words carefully. Once your words exit your mouth, they can't be taken back.

A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. (**Proverbs 15:1**)
Death and life are in the power of the tongue and those who love it will eat its fruit (**Proverbs 18:21**)

In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise. (**Proverbs 10:19**)

5. Choose to control your thoughts and actions.

Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. (**2 Corinthians 10:5**)

A person's wisdom yields patience; it is to one's glory to overlook an offense. (**Proverbs 19:11**)

→Later, when you can process the situation...

6. Get to the root of the problem. (Ask yourself, "Why am I angry, offended, or hurt?")
7. Acknowledge and accept responsibility for YOUR role in the matter, if any. (It's easy to see yourself as a victim when you are hurt. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you your heart and His perspective, because we do not naturally detect the root system of anger/bitterness in our own hearts.)
8. If possible, when time permits, calmly discuss the matter with the person(s) involved. Attack the problem not the person(s). (Example: when this happened, it made me feel as though...)

Let no corrupt communication/unwholesome talk proceed out of your mouth, only that which is helpful for building others up according to THEIR needs, that it may benefit those who listen. (**Ephesians 4:29**)

Speak the truth in love. (**Ephesians 4:15**)

9. If you have been operating from an angry/bitter place, humble yourself before God, repent, and apologize to others... Admit that your bitterness is unjustified and that your bitter spirit is sin.

10. Place the blame where it rightfully belongs – on Satan. You have a right to be angry at him. Remember that our battle is not against flesh and blood! It's a spiritual battle, and there's a lot at stake. **Satan wants to turn our weaknesses into wickedness, which gives him more access to our hearts.**

The thief (**Satan**) comes but for to steal (**joy, peace, etc**), and to kill (**dreams, hopes, etc.**), and to destroy (**your future, life, relationships, etc.**) : I (Jesus) am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. (**John 10:10**)

→Going forward....

11. Choose to deal with small "issues" or offenses before they build into resentment/bitterness.
12. Do not hold on to bitterness, but replace it with love, kindness and forgiveness. (See attached scriptures.)

Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offense. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you (**Colossians 3:13 MSG**)

Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. (**Romans 12:19**)

13. Memorize scriptures that speak to your heart regarding love and forgiveness especially when you feel challenged to entertain bitterness again.
14. Take comfort in knowing that the very tool that Satan uses for bitterness, God will use as vessels for blessings. (**Romans 8:28**)
15. Give up the "woe is me" victim mentality. Pray for your enemies (or those who you perceive to be an enemy at the time) and concern yourself with other people - **Job 42:10**. And the LORD restored the fortunes of Job, when he prayed for his friends. And the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before. When Job was able to lose his self-pity and begin to pray for the very ones to whom he had transferred his bitterness, his bitterness vanished. God then restored him to a greater level of usability than he had ever known before.
- 15 Allow yourself to become vulnerable and accept the love of others. (**Ruth 1** - Naomi was caught up in a web of self-pity and bitterness. She felt unloved and unaccepted by God. So God sent her a package of love she couldn't refuse: Ruth and Boaz)

Scriptures

Leviticus 19:18: Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear [carry or keep] any grudge [bitterness] against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am the Lord.

Proverbs 17:9: [Love can overcome bitterness, but watch out about opening up old hurts felt from others. Better to forgive and forget.] He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth [harps about] a matter separates very [true] friends. [See also **10:12.**]

Matthew 6:14, 15: ...for if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you: 15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Matthew 18:23-35: [In His parable of the unmerciful servant, Jesus made it clear that we will suffer if we refuse to sincerely forgive our brethren, when we know Jesus has had mercy on our sins.] 35 So likewise shall My Heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

Romans 2:1-6: [Hypocritical, judgmental, self-righteousness can cause us to harbor bitterness, while feeling justified for doing so, yet it ends up bringing God's punishments upon ourselves.] You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. So when you, a mere human being, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. God "will repay each person according to what they have done."

1 Peter 4:8: [Even if someone has mistreated or wronged you, God's love is love enough to forgive.] 8 And above all things have fervent love among yourselves: for love shall cover the multitude of sins. [Bitterness stems from feelings of anger and an unforgiving attitude towards others.]

Proverbs 27:7: [If we are truly hungry to learn from the Lord, even bitter experiences are looked upon as "blessings in disguise."] 7 One who is full loathes honey from the comb, but to the hungry even what is bitter tastes sweet.

Matthew 5:23, 24: "23Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, 24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

Mark 11:25: And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."

Romans 8:28: [Bitterness is also described as the feelings resulting from something that is difficult to accept; so it's important to always remember that the Lord has a good purpose in everything that He allows to happen to us.] We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.

Romans 12:2: [God's Word often speaks of "renewing our minds," which implies letting go of the old; particularly any past grievances and bitterness.] 2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. [See also **Ephesians 4:23.**]

Ephesians 4:26b, 27: [Going to bed in anger is an avenue for the Devil to work.] 26 ...Let not the sun go down upon your wrath; 27 neither give place to the Devil.

Philippians 3:13: [Bitterness is also caused by holding on to bad or angry feelings about someone or something that happened, but the Lord tells us to *forget* the things that are past.] 13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before.

Colossians 3:13: Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

Hebrews 12:14-15: 14 Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. 15 See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to because trouble and defile many.

James 4:1-12: What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us? But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says:

"God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble."

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up. Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?