

Bitterness and feelings of alienation are no strangers to any of us. We all have had some "hate" relationships. We like to say "I just never liked him", but the Bible says an unforgiving attitude is "hate".

This is a barrier not only to the person in conflict with, but it has a negative effect on all our relationships.

The Bible says holding onto bitterness against another is Sin. In Ps. 32:3, David said when he kept quiet about his sin, his body wasted away and his vitality was drained away. So, the consequences of unresolved alienation is serious.

Three areas of its consequences are: Physical, Spiritual, and Emotional.

The Physical: It is a well accepted physiological fact that when we carry deep feelings, unconscious or conscious, of hate, anger, and bitterness toward another it can result in physical manifestations, such as, skin conditions, ulcers, colitis, etc. When we hold onto an unresolved bitterness we develop a "floating bitterness" that is facially evident - The Angry Contenance that God saw in Cain. *Anorexia*

The Emotional: These negative attitudes take a great deal of emotional strength. Spending negative emotion leads to depression, a state of emotional exhaustion. Ps. 32:4 - "my vitality was drained away..." *Heb 12:15*

The Spiritual:

1. The development of wrong internal attitudes. We conform to the very person we are bitter at. The Bible teaches us that the attitudes we set our minds on influence what we become and what we think. *negative*

(Perhaps we say we were hated by our older brother. As we hold to this bitter thought, it becomes part of our contenance and cripples us from ever responding with the opposite attitude-love. Rather we mimick the very attitude (hate) that we say he had against us.)

2. The development of Guilt. It is necessary for a Christian to have a relatively free conscience. We can't continue to react in a way we know is wrong. What can be more wrong than being embittered against another?

ITim. 1:19 "...keep faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered SHIPWRECK in regard to their faith. *"You cannot trust God!!!"*

A bad conscience leads to guilt. Guilt then produces a "shipwrecked" faith. Christ teaches us that there is a strong connection between hate and murder; between lust and adultery.

I John 2:9-11 teaches us that those who love walk in the light, but those who hate remain in darkness. Hate, unresolved, has no place in a Christian life.

Matt 5:23, 12:34; 18:15-18

Ask to have open heart → know where are bitter

"You are a Regular Person" Joyce Landorf

**Phil 1:6*

HOW TO BEGIN TO RESOLVE NEGATIVE PAST-LIFE EXPERIENCES

1. Recognize and acknowledge a problem as a problem. You may be afraid to do this if you feel no hope in this area. Scripture says that if we agree with God about our sins, He will heal us (1 John 1:9) Honesty with God is the first essential step toward healing. (James 5:16)

2. Learn to be transparent. By telling a Christian about your past problem, the healing process which is begun with God is carried out through the support of love in the Body. As we confess our sins to one another, we are healed. (James 5:16) Seek out the advice of older Christians. In many cases, you may need professional advice from a Christian counselor. We must expect such healing to be painful, but accept it as a sign that true healing is occurring. (Hebrews 12:11) tells us that "All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit and righteousness". This is a promise of Peaceable Joy!

If not painful = no healing
3. Give yourself the time you need to gain victory over your problems. Have the wisdom to delay your marriage plans until you know that your past problems are resolved and under control. This also applies to delaying plans if your partner has unresolved problems.

If you are unwilling to wait for God to prepare you for the most important and difficult role of marriage, you invite needless disaster. "Wait upon the Lord" (Is 40:31)

I. Honestly ask God to reveal truth to you about persons in your life that you hold bitterness against that has never been resolved.

A. List the grievances committed against you by one person

C. After completing A and B, list your sins committed against this person

(*note "inner attitudes")

B. List all the good things about this person you can possibly remember. Everyone has some good!

In the C section, truthfully add your negative reactions and attitudes. In most cases, our list actually mimicks the very traits we hated in the other person! Often the list under A is 95% longer than our list under C. This makes our feelings look legitimate.

II. Pray. Tell God that the purpose in your heart is to resolve these conflicts no matter what the cost. Tell Him that you know it is His Will and you are willing.

Read Matt. 18:21-35. Jesus say He forgives us not up to 7 times - but 70 x 7. He ends this teaching by telling us the necessity of forgiving our brother "from your heart" in verse 35.

Paul teaches us in Eph. 4: 31-32 to "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, FORGIVING EACH OTHER, JUST AS GOD IN CHRIST, ALSO HAS FORGIVEN YOU."

He is teaching us the Christian walk. It is true that we are forgiven even when we refuse to forgive, but how daring to refuse! We remain tied to a known sin.

Jesus teaches us about personal relationships in His sermon on the mount. Matt. 5:21-24 " But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty.....If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering."

Conflicts with other people need to be resolved first before you can have a good relationship with the Lord and His Body.

III. Forgive. Realize that by not forgiving this person you have been guilty of sin against him. Confess this, repent, and believe that God has forgiven you.

Therefore, if God has forgiven me and I have forgiven this person I can present myself to this person with a right attitude.

IV. Ask Forgiveness of the Person. Remember it is your inner attitudes that you will want forgiveness for. (Example: we cannot ask for forgiveness from a father who is against our becoming believers for our "hurting" him by becoming believers. But we can ask his forgiveness for our resentment against him.)

The relationship can improve in some ways if we don't actually ask forgiveness, but it will never completely be healed. We can take steps that show our repentance - showing concern, respect, willingness to be with them.....etc. (In the case of a parent and son conflict, the son might cut his long hair - his symbol of rebellion.)

If you do actually verbally ask forgiveness and they are unwilling, then ask what requirements they have of you. Be willing here if their requirements are within your limits as a Christian. *Rom 12:18*

Conclusion: If this principle of dealing with barriers is practiced as part of our Christian walk, it will serve as an invaluable healing agent for the trials that occur in marriage.

*When give
a problem relating
you back to
your family.
it almost always*