

Bitterness

Bitterness

HOW IT CAN EFFECT
YOU PHYSICALLY, EMOTIONALLY,
AND SPIRITUALLY

M A R I A N P A G E



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To Jesus, my blessed Savior, I give all my thanks.

“See to it that no one misses the grace of God
and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble
and defile many.”

—Hebrews 12:15 NIV



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Preface

The reason I'm writing this book is because bitterness controlled my life for thirty-three years. When I woke in the morning and when I went to bed at night, it was eating at the core of my soul.

I'll start with a short testimony. Due to my parents' divorce, I was put in foster care until I was seven. One of the foster homes wanted to adopt me, but my foster mom died. Soon I was put into another foster home. It was there that I was adopted. At the age of seven and for the next eleven years, I was treated as a slave and an outcast. I went to church every Sunday, but I could not tell anyone what I was facing.

On July 5, 1959, at the age of twelve, I knew that I needed Christ as my Savior and I accepted him into my life. Things did not change until my senior year

in high school when my father took me back to live with him. At this point, I had no interest in church or spiritual things. I got involved in drinking and immoral relationships.

God got ahold of my heart and I repented and asked for forgiveness. He restored me to himself. I forgave the family that treated me so badly, and I decided to go to Bible school. I wanted to get a better knowledge of the Scriptures. Of course, the real reason was to find a nice young man. Soon I believed I had found that nice young man...a man who knew the Scriptures well, who could help me grow in the Word of God...a man I could love for the rest of my life.

We were married on August 22, 1970. We started our life as pastor and wife in a small town in Vermont. By the time our first child came along, I was seeing things in our marriage that were not biblical.

When our second child came, I was even more concerned. I really did not know the man I had wed. I married because I wanted someone to love and for him to love me back. That was not happening. I resigned myself to raising our children. When they were on their own, I realized I had to finally deal with my bitterness and I needed biblical counseling. I mention biblical counseling because that is the only way you can find true help for your soul, body and mind. Through biblical counseling, I began to realize that God did love me and understood that I

was very bitter towards my husband and needed to ask for forgiveness from him.

I also know that no matter what comes into my life, it is not a mistake. God said, Consider it pure joy, my brothers whenever you face trials of many kinds because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete not lacking anything.

—James 1: 2-4 NIV

I say all this so you can see that my experiences with bitterness led me to write this book so others can benefit from it.

I'm happy to say that both my husband and I are growing in our love for each other because I resolved not to stay bitter.



Introduction

Before I begin to discuss how bitterness affects the body physically, the mind emotionally, and the soul spiritually, I want to explain what bitterness means.

The American Heritage Dictionary says of bitterness, “It causes sharp pain to the body or discomfort to the mind. It shows a continued hatred to or having resentfulness and disappointment towards someone.”

Physically

Stress and The Body

God has created us in a unique and wonderful way. Psalms 139:13-16 tells us how God knew us even before we were born. God made our frames and he knitted together all of our body parts. God knew our days and ordained them. God established our days before we were conceived and wrote them all down in his book. If God did all of this for us, we can certainly trust God to sustain us every day. He will sustain us until the time he has chosen for us to die, or until he returns.

I had to realize these truths before I could even conceive how bitterness could have an effect on my body. Bitterness affected my body physically, emotionally, and in my spiritual life with God. Bitterness can affect your body in many different ways as well.

It can also create stress, and stress can lead to sickness, and sickness often results in death.

I pray that you will be strengthened and encouraged in your walk with God through this book.

In the Bible, we see that bitterness is a sin and how God deals with this sin. This may very well be the sin that Jesus dealt with and healed on at least two occasions in the New Testament. One is found in Mathew 9:1 when Jesus said “Your sins are forgiven.” The other is found in John 5:1-14 when Jesus said, “Go and sin no more.”

In this chapter, I will deal with bitterness and how it causes stress. Stress is defined as “an applied force that tends to strain or deform the body,” according to *The American Heritage Dictionary*. Since bitterness and stress are closely related, it is reasonable to say that bitterness is an applied force that tends to strain or deform the body.

I faced this every day, when I could not bring myself to forgive those who were hurting me. The more I kept the bitterness inside and allowed it to get out of control, the more bitterness affected my reaction to it and how I functioned every day. This built-up bitterness led to a gradual decline in my health. After eating away at the core of my life for many years. Look upon my affliction and my distress and take away all my sins (Psalms 25: 18 NIV).

I know Christ died for my sins, but I could not understand how God could love me with all that bitterness in my spirit. I was hurting on the inside for a long time, and I allowed that long-term

bitterness to work on my body and spirit. Stress does the same thing to your body that bitterness does to your spirit. It starts out with aches: headaches, body aches—nothing major at first. When left unchecked, it grows. I am not saying that all aches are due to stress, but in my case it was true. Stress can then lead to more serious conditions, such as heart problems and stomach disorders, eventually weakening your body and limiting what you are able to do.

Although I was weak and in pain, the doctors had no solution for my condition. I know now that the bitterness in my spirit due to my life circumstances was putting stress on my body.

In the Bible, Jeremiah dealt with a spirit of bitterness in his life. Known as the weeping prophet due to his heartache over Israel's sin of rebellion against God, which led to captivity, Jeremiah grieved for his people. Israel refused to worship the Lord God as he had commanded. In the book of Lamentations, Jeremiah writes a poem lamenting over Israel and the ruin of Jerusalem. Jeremiah was not a bitter person in that he wanted his own way, nor was he mad at God for taking away his possessions.

Jeremiah was bitter in spirit toward the sin of the people of Israel as they disregarded God and his commands. The people of Israel never put God first in their lives or listened to what God had said in his Word to do. Israel ultimately brought the captivity and the loss of their land upon themselves because of their sins against God. After Jeremiah's repeated warning to Israel, especially to Judah, instructing

them to change their ways and return to God, Jeremiah became depressed, bitter, and discouraged to the point of exhaustion, which led him to write the poem of lamentation.

I believe that Jeremiah was stressed out to the point of death. The first twenty verses in Lamentations 3 are the beginning of Jeremiah's lament or prayer of grief to God concerning the bitterness in his soul. In these verses, Jeremiah pours out to God how he is besieged and surrounded with bitterness and hardship. After Jeremiah's prayer, in the next five verses he rejoices because God's compassions fail not and because he had hope in God's salvation.

Looking at the life of Jeremiah, we can see how he was mistreated and thrown into a pit and left there to die by Judah. Is it any wonder that Jeremiah became vexed in spirit as Jerusalem was being seized? But Jeremiah came to know that God is faithful to bring him through the stressful time he had to face.

I close this chapter with these words from Psalms 30:2

O Lord my God,
I called to you for help
And you healed me.

—NIV