

## **WHEN YOU'VE BEEN WRONGED**

### *Chapter 7: From Bitterness to Blessing*

If you have ever weeded a garden, you know that there are only two ways to attack those weeds. You can cut them off at ground level or dig them out at the roots. Only the second way solves the problem.

When bitterness takes root in your life, it's nearly impossible to deal with it at the surface level. I've learned that our choice to forgive might begin at a superficial level, but it must continue to go deeper. At first the feelings of anger and pain might go dormant for hours or days, but eventually, the bitterness raises its ugly head. That's what this chapter is about, attacking bitterness at its root, root level forgiveness and wherever possible, root level reconciliation.

#### **Bitterness Overflowing**

In Hebrews we read, "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). This verse teaches us two things about bitterness: First, it has a root; and second, as the root spreads, it defiles many.

When you are bitter or expressing bitterness, who is affected?

Have you ever found yourself attempting to build alliances or recruit a posse who will affirm your pain and plight?

Have you ever found yourself "living angry?" Who might be affected by your "Living angry?"

Is there any such thing as a bitter person who keeps their bitterness to themselves?

The Bible does show us that there is hope for a person living with bitterness. One man who allowed God to heal his pain, and because he did it impacted the spiritual legacy of an entire generation. His name is Joseph—a man of total forgiveness.

#### **Joseph the Dreamer**

Joseph was only 17 when the biblical story picks up. He has more than a few strikes against him,

- He was the second youngest of twelve brothers.
- He was talented and handsome.
- He was his Father's favorite son. That alone put him on a collision course with his brothers.
- His Father gave him a richly ornamented robe, which in effect said, "I want you to have the blessing of the firstborn."
- Joseph was also a dreamer. Not of daydreams, but of literal dreams. Every dream exalted him above his brothers. And his brothers hated him for it.
- Let's look at the story in Genesis, Chapter 37: 5-11.

### **Reasons for Bitterness**

One day Jacob sent his son Joseph to check on his brothers who were tending the family sheep in the hill country. When the brothers saw him coming, they devised a plan to kill him. They said in effect, "Let's kill him and then see what becomes his dreams!" (Genesis 37:17-19).

- Do you know anyone who would like to end your dream? Jealousy, envy, and territorialism always plot the downfall of others.

### **Betrayed**

Fortunately for Joseph, one of his brothers, Reuben, persuaded the others not to take Joseph's life. Instead they threw him in a pit and left him to die alone. Then they sat down to eat their midday meal. As they are eating, a caravan of Ishmaelite traders passes by which hatched another plan that would spare Joseph, but bring great pain to their father (Genesis 37:26-28).

As far as the brothers were concerned, that was the end of their pesky brother. They dipped his coat in the blood of a wild animal and presented it to Jacob. They tricked Jacob into believing that Joseph had been killed and eaten. Jacob mourned for Joseph for twenty years, while his brothers were able to keep their dark secret hidden. The older brothers completely forgot about Joseph. You see, this is what happens to your conscience when you conceal your sin. It will keep reminding you

until it finally dies and no longer affects you. The brothers hardened their hearts and kept the lie to themselves.

As for Joseph, his fate, humanly speaking, was worse than death. To be a slave in Egypt was doubly terrifying for a stranger who didn't know the language or the culture. He could expect to work under the cruelest conditions or to be beaten to death. The day he left on the caravan, all hope must have died in his soul. To make matters worse, he knew his brothers were happy about his terrible fate. Their hatred and betrayal stung.

Have you ever felt this way? Have you ever been betrayed by a friend or loved one? Have you ever experienced someone you loved being happy to see you in misery? How did it impact your day to day living? What kind of thoughts did you think, and how did it affect your faith in God? How did it affect your family? For Joseph things only get worse for here. But just like in your walk with Christ, God is on the move. We will be able to explore in the weeks ahead how God moved in Joseph's life. However, the bigger question is, do you believe God is moving in your life.

**Next Week: Falsely Accused.**