



Part 3: Doing Without Bitterness

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Luke 2:4-7

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

Shocking Truth: There was no angry innkeeper!

A Tragic Story of Bitterness

Ahithophel was a beloved advisor to King David (*Psalm 55:12-14* & *2 Samuel 16:23*)

There was a falling out between these dear friends

Ahithophel was Bathsheba's grandfather

David's son (Absalom) tries to steal his father's kingdom and Ahithophel sides with Absalom

Ahithophel carries bitterness and unforgiveness in his heart for 11 years

Ahithophel's Advice to Absalom:

a. Disgrace your father (*2 Samuel 16:21-22*)

2 Samuel 17:1-4

¹ Ahithophel said to Absalom, "I would choose twelve thousand men and set out tonight in pursuit of David. ² I would attack him while he is weary and weak. I would strike him with terror, and then all the people with him will flee. I would strike down only the king ³ and bring all the people back to you. The death of the man you seek will mean the return of all; all the people will be unharmed." ⁴ This plan seemed good to Absalom and to all the elders of Israel.

b. Chase your father (*2 Samuel 17:1-2*)

c. Kill your father (*2 Samuel 17:3-4*)

Keen insight into the obvious: Ahithophel is bitter!

What We Can Learn

Bitterness is when we drink poison in hopes that it will hurt someone else.

Bitterness grows when we allow a hurt to become a hate.

We torment ourselves when we fail to forgive.

(Continues on back)

Colossians 3:13

Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Forgiveness is not:

Forgetting
Diminishing
Overlooking
Denying
Condoning
Momentary and instantaneous

Forgiveness is:

Releasing a person from our judgment
Choosing not to punish
Refusing to harbor an offense
Giving mercy when none is deserved
Setting free our offender and ourselves

Bitterness only hurts you. (2 Samuel 17:23)

The Heart of God for Forgiveness: 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! ¹⁸All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. ²¹God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Next Steps

Christmas Communion: Come this Sunday night and celebrate the fact that we can be reconciled to God through the sacrifice Jesus made. Choose from two service times: 5:30 PM (childcare available) or 7:00 PM (no childcare available). Full details on today's program insert.

Small Group Questions



- 1) Have you ever participated in a Christmas production? What role did you play?
- 2) What every day occurrences make you bitter? Long lines at Costco, ungrateful kids, long sermons?
- 3) Ahithophel's bitterness seems warranted. What do you do when your anger is justified?
- 4) Who do you need to forgive? What is making it so hard? Refer to the statements above to help identify the roadblock. Is it that you can't forgive or that you won't forgive?
- 5) Scripture is clear – forgive as God forgave you. Will you be obedient?
- 6) How can we pray for you today?