



Biblical Insights for the Coming Week. Just 5 Minutes a Day for 5 Days.

Take5 for the Week of February 2-6, 2015

## The Bitter Heart

By Pastor Brian Howard

MONDAY

### Know my heart

Ephesians 4:31

None of us set out to carry around bitterness but, over time, it can become part of us. Like a lingering cough, we carry it around and it brings out the worst in us. We may think it is solely our circumstances that made us this way, but the Bible points out that our past is only part of the equation. We are also responsible for our bitterness, and that is where we will begin.

In Ephesians 4:31 Paul tells the Ephesians to "Get rid of all bitterness." The first thing that we must do to get rid of bitterness is identify it in our hearts, for we can't get rid of something we can't find. For many of us the bitterness has been lingering in us for some time and we have gone to great lengths to cover it up and ignore it. Spiritually, the most mature thing we can do is admit the honest truth about ourselves, even if we don't like what we find. Psalm 139:23 says, "Search me, God, and know my heart." This is an invitation for God to uncover the hidden things of our heart and begin the process of healing.

**FOR TODAY:** Pray Psalm 139:23 throughout the day.

TUESDAY

### Something better

Ephesians 4:32

The antidote to bitterness is not trying to be less bitter. There is virtually no sin that can be overcome simply by "just saying no." Willpower may overcome sin quickly, but it takes something much more in the long term.

In Ephesians 4:32, Paul commands that the people "be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as Christ forgave you." What he is saying is that, in the long term, the only way to deal with bitterness is to do the opposite! Every time you are kind, compassionate and forgiving you break the chains of bitterness upon your life.

**FOR TODAY:** Take a step toward being kind, compassionate or forgiving to someone.

WEDNESDAY

### Remember

Exodus 16

If you want an example of what bitter, cranky, complaining people look like, take a few moments to read Exodus 16. In this chapter, the nation of Israel has just been liberated from slavery by walking on dry ground through the red sea, complaining that the food God is miraculously providing for them is not good enough.

A sure sign that there is something wrong with our hearts is when we stop remembering and seeing what God has done, and is still doing, for us. Just as God liberated the Israelites and provided food for them, He has done that, and so much more, in your life. If you are a believer in Jesus, He has not only saved you from your slavery to sin, but He sustains you every day through His Holy Spirit. He has made you His child and given you promises that will never be broken. Whatever tough things have occurred in your life, nothing compares to the immeasurable grace and love that God has already shown you.

**FOR TODAY:** Write out a list of 10-15 things God has done for you.

THURSDAY

### "Back in the Day"

Exodus 16

After hundreds of years of soul-crushing slavery in Egypt, from which they cried out to the Lord to be rescued, this is how the Israelites described their experience: "There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted..." (Exodus 16:3). Does this sound like slavery to you? If your answer to this question is no, then you are onto something important that this text is communicating.

All of us are tempted to believe that what happened "back in the day" was far better than anything that is happening now. We are so committed to this belief that at times we paint the past in a better light than it really was and distort the truth. The reality is that whatever God is leading you into is far better than what He is leading you from. It may not seem that way, but we must rest on the truth expressed in Romans 8:28, "God works all things for the good of those who love him."

**FOR TODAY:** Thank God for where He has brought you.

FRIDAY

### Be content

Hebrews 13:5

Sometimes the Bible gives us a command that is so simple there is no way it can be misinterpreted. In Hebrews 13:5, the author commands us to, "...be content with what you have." But this is not an easy thing, which is why the author also gives us a motivation for doing so. That command is based on the truth that God will never leave us nor forsake us.

Think about this truth for a moment: God will never leave you or forsake you. What more could you possibly want? Only a fool would exchange that glorious reality for all the riches of the world. No matter what you do, or what happens to you, God is always with you. The action is on God's part, not yours. It is His grace that keeps Him with you, not your effort. This is the stunning reality made possible by the cross of Christ and it is the central reason why there is no place for bitterness, resentment or complaining in the Christian life.

**FOR TODAY:** Thank God that He will never leave nor forsake you.