

Learning to Forgive

One summer, when I was a young boy, I was plagued with a painful boil. I remember the poultice my mother made me wear to draw out the boil's poison.

As with physical infections, we should be aware of spiritual infections, spiritual boils that could poison our whole life unless the poison is drawn out of us.

One such poison-filled boil is bitterness, which can poison our whole nature.

If we ignore and hold on to this negative emotion of bitterness it can continue to feed poison into many aspects of our life.

Such a bitter attitude just like my boil is hard to hide.

When the person, family or group we are bitter towards is mentioned, we get angry, clam up or find ourselves saying things which hurt other people.

Rather than nursing our grievances, we need to draw out the poison of bitterness and allow the wounds we have caused to heal.

Symptoms

It is easy to diagnose someone suffering from an unforgiving bitter attitude.

The bitter person becomes super-sensitive and suspicious of others' motives.

A bitter, unforgiving person is withdrawn into themselves and are easily hurt.

They are anxious, tense and emotional. Outbursts of anger are not uncommon.

They do not want to be healed or soothed, nor do they want to forget.

Ephesians 4:31 [NIV] *“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.”*

Notice other symptoms that are linked with bitterness. The poison of bitterness, just like my boil, does **not** directly hurt others but always hurts us and **the personal internal torment that unforgiveness can bring is great**

Prescription

To avoid infection from an unforgiving attitude we must act on the admonition given to us in God's Handbook for Life, the Christian Bible.

Ephesians 4:32 [NIV] *“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”*

Forgiving others is **not** always easy, but it is absolutely necessary for recovery.

Refusing to forgive a person poisons the inner being and produces spiritual and emotional sickness that no doctor's medicine can cure.

No matter how badly we have been hurt in the past or how harshly we have been treated by others, we still need to deal with the poisonous results in our own lives.

Unless we learn to forgive we will never progress, nor be truly happy ourselves.

The key to forgiving is in the last part of **Ephesians 4:32**.

Paul reminds us that God will forgive our sins when we confess them to Him, and repent, one of these sins is having a bitter attitude.

It may **not** be easy to forgive those who have **not** repented of their wrong towards us, but we don't have to remain bitter towards them.

Romans 5:8 [NIV] *"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: **While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**"*

God gives us this perfect example of love and forgiveness.

Depending on the seriousness of the offence, sometimes forgiveness takes time.

For example, if a person is the victim of sex abuse in childhood, he or she may find it especially hard to forgive the offender. The emotional wounds of bitterness can be paralysing.

Yet such a person should work towards having the spirit of forgiveness regardless of the attitude of the offender.

This is **not** easy, but ultimately it is the **only way** to heal what has gone before.

Let us seek to put away bitterness now.

Seek counsel if necessary.

Ask God to give us a forgiving attitude.

Don't let an unforgiving spirit put us off balance emotionally and spiritually, it is an agonising way to live.

Matthew 6:14-15 [Message Bible] *"In prayer there is a connection between what God does and what you do. **You can't get forgiveness from God, for instance, without also forgiving others** if you refuse to do your part, you cut yourself off from God."*

The freedom that forgiveness from God brings is a marvellous thing indeed, but it is only ours when we practice it towards others.