

5 Ways to Guard Your Heart Against Bitterness

Can Christ overcome our mind-consuming battles with bitterness? Why is it that it's easy for us to bring the "big stuff" to God—cancer, broken marriages, financial problems—but when it comes to matters of the heart, we try to handle it ourselves.

We think, "God, I've got this. These heart problems are just things that I struggle with. I shouldn't still be hurting over something as simple as bitterness, so I'm going to pretend that I'm not. Or I'm just going to wait it out and hope these nasty feelings go away. God would be ashamed of me if I told Him I was still battling this."

Here are some practical barriers we must put in place to guard against this sneaky, consuming beast!

1. Pray that God will overcome it. Continue praying that He will until He does. The problem with bitterness is it is consuming, it comes out of left field, and it has the tenacity to take us out. It speaks loudly and constantly, and it's a voice that feels impossible to shut out—but I promise you, friend, it is not impossible. Praise God!

Pray not only for your own heart but also for the person that hurt you. Pray specific good things—the very hardest thing to pray for them—and watch what God does.

2. Our view of God must be bigger and viewed with higher respect than what's frustrating us. God and what matters to God should consume our minds first. God and His view of me and how He wants me to view things should be the filter by which I see the world.

3. Focus and say out loud your blessings and the good things God is doing in your life. Because we're sinful, when these ugly feelings present themselves, we like to bask in them.

I'm a Southern girl, and in the South, we use the term *waller*. Even though we know the proper way to say it is *wallow*, *wallow* doesn't correctly explain our sick relationship with these ugly feelings. We *waller* in them. We get filthy. There is nothing dainty or cute about it.

These ugly feelings can cause us to make idiots of ourselves when they drive our mouths to say things that are better left unsaid. Can you relate with me here? There have been times in my life that I have been caught muddy from head to toe from all the ugly wallering I've done.

4. Don't let your frustrations define you. The things that cause bitterness also try to claim they define us.

- Your job
- Your relationships (family members, friendships, an estranged child, co-workers)
- Financial struggles
- Car problems
- Infertility
- Singleness

You do not begin and end with these things. When we place all of our focus on one of these things, we have allowed our heartache to become our idol. Anything that we give the power to steal our focus from God becomes our idol.

5. God's plan for you is bigger than what is momentarily hurting you. When we focus on our bitterness (anger, frustration, hurt), it blinds us to where God is at work in our lives, and we miss the blessings He has in store for the heart surrendered to following Him.

The enemy wants to steal that joy and replace it with bitterness.

Today, if that sneaky snake of bitterness tries to worm its way into our hearts, let's refuse to let him win this battle! May we choose instead to make Philippians 4:4-8 our battle cry

against bitterness!

*Reprinted with permission from © Missional Women. **Melissa Bradley** is married with two small children. She serves at a church plant in Hendersonville, N.C. The passion of her heart is to live every day missionally. Check out Melissa's blog at Beautiful Mommy Feet.*