

# Life Lessons

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## Five Steps to Overcoming Bitterness

On October 3, 2006, a milk-truck driver carrying three guns and a *childhood grudge* stormed a one-room Amish schoolhouse in Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania and then opened fire on a dozen girls, aged 6-13, killing three people before committing suicide.

The gunman, a 32-year-old truck driver, was bent on killing young girls as a way of "acting out in revenge for *something that happened 20 years ago*," police officer said. I really believe this was about this individual and what was going on inside his head," said the police officer present.

Have you ever been hurt in your life? Most of us have. But the way we deal with hurt makes a world of difference. When our hurts are not dealt with properly, bitterness sets in and it destroys us inside out.

Bitterness and resentment are deadly poison from the pits of hell. *The worst thing about bitterness is that it doesn't stop.* Unless you repent and make a conscious decision, it keeps getting worse. What started as a little seed of hurt quickly turns into a monster. To make matters worse the Bible says that many people can be hurt by one person's bitterness. "See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled." (Heb.12:15)

When you're bitter about someone, you focus on what that "terrible person" has done to you. Behind the sustaining causes of bitterness is pride. It thinks something like this, "I have a right to be angry and resentful *because of what they did to me.*" We think that blaming others will justify our own actions.

Sometimes the poison of bitterness is so thick that we constantly think about the person who has hurt us. We have the same attitudes and the same spirit, and exactly the same outlook on life as the person we hate

the most. These people have a grip on our lives -- we're always thinking about them. Do it long enough and you will become like the person you focus on.

Corrie Ten Boom, who suffered horrendous brutality in the hands of the Nazis once said, "*Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart.*" Getting out of bitterness is not easy but it benefits you the most. Here are some practical tips to overcome hurt and bitterness.

1. Make a list of all the people who have hurt you. You'll be amazed how easy and naturally this comes to you.
2. Make a list of things YOU have done to hurt them. Again, you'll be surprised, how hard this is to do because we judge people by their *action* but we judge ourselves by our *intention*.
3. Make another list of things you have done to displease God. Use the same standards here as you do to accuse others. This will get even tougher!
4. Ask God to forgive you and those whom you have hurt. Receive His forgiveness and then grant to others what you've received. Forgiveness is a supernatural thing. One way to measure forgiveness is to stop thinking and talking about it. This is the hardest and most crucial step in the process; it will take some time.
5. Destroy the files in your mental cabinet. Refuse to think and relive the events of the past that have hurt you.

Getting out of bitterness is NOT a choice. If you don't get it out of you, it will get you. What will you do?