

Freedom Prayer Guide 01—

# **FREEDOM FROM BITTERNESS**

## GETTING STARTED:

**Prior to doing this freedom step, please listen to the following teachings from Antioch Waco's Journey to Freedom teaching series:**

- Journey to Freedom: You Can Be Free
- Journey to Freedom: Jesus Came to Heal the Brokenhearted
- Journey to Freedom: The Process of Freedom
- Journey to Freedom: Freedom from Idolatry
- Journey to Freedom: Freedom from Bitterness

You can listen to these at <https://antiochwaco.com/series/journey-to-freedom/>

**In this Freedom Prayer Guide, we are going to take time to prayerfully:**

- Identify places we have harbored bitterness.
- Confess and repent of the ways we have harbored bitterness.
- Replace our bitterness with forgiveness.

## REVIEW THE TEACHING:

As a discipleship group discuss what you learned from the sermon Freedom from Bitterness

**Key Scriptures from the Teaching:**

- *Ephesians 4:31-32* - "Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."
- *Hebrews 12:15* - "See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many."
- *James 3:14-17* - "But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness."

**As a reminder, the big ideas shared in the sermons are:**

- A simple definition of bitterness is unresolved anger, disappointment and resentment.
- Bitterness can take root and spread, affecting many.
- Jesus loves us and wants to lead us in forgiveness so that we can walk free of the bondage of bitterness and into the abundant life He desires for us.

## REMEMBER:

God loves you with an everlasting love (*Jeremiah 31:3*) and is with you (*Hebrews 13.5*). As we go through this freedom prayer experience, we want to encounter God in fresh ways and let Him love us, free us, heal us and transform us (*Revelation 1.4-5*) into people who love Him and love others wholeheartedly (*Mark 12.30-31*).

**As we go through each step, be attentive to the Holy Spirit's leadership and guidance.**

### Opening Prayer:

Have someone lead out in praying this guided prayer over your group:

*Heavenly Father, thank you for the forgiveness you have extended to me through your Son. Please search our hearts, our thoughts and our lives and reveal to us any places we have been holding on to bitterness and unforgiveness to others, and in so doing and have opened my life up to the demonic bondage that brings (*2 Corinthians 10-11*). We want to keep ourselves from idols and to worship you wholeheartedly (*1 John 5.21*).*

## CONFESS:

A simple working definition of confession is *agreeing with God's perspective on a topic*.

### Scripture gives us a great promise for the power of confession:

- *1 John 1:9*: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."
- *Proverbs 28:13*: "Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy."

During this phase of the freedom journey, we want to turn to God's Word and God's Spirit to highlight to us place where we have harbored bitterness, and then we are going to take time to prayerfully confess this.

### Bitterness Inventory:

God is perfect in all of His ways (*Deuteronomy 32.4*). However there are many stories in Scripture of people struggling with bitterness, anger and resentment towards God and needing to surrender those feelings and entrust themselves to God and His ways even when life plays out differently than they would have hoped for. Here are some examples from Scripture. Read over these examples and note any that you can relate to.

- David struggled with bitterness for God's apparent abandoning of David (*Psalms 22:1*)
- Jonah struggled with bitterness for God's grace and compassion for those Jonah hated (*Jonah 4.2-3*)

- Naomi struggled with bitterness towards God on account of the pain and loss she had experienced (*Ruth 1.20-21*)
- Jeremiah struggled with bitterness towards God on account of his own loneliness and the challenges of his work (*Jeremiah 7.27-28, 16.1-9*)
- Martha struggled with bitterness towards God because Jesus did not work on her timeline (*John 11.21*)
- Habakkuk struggled with bitterness towards God because of God's apparent inaction in the face of evil (*Habakkuk 1.2-4,13*)

**There are also many stories in Scripture of people becoming embittered against other people. Prayerfully read over these examples and note any you can relate to:**

- *Bitterness Towards Leaders:* The Israelites harbored bitterness towards Moses (Exodus 15:22-25): They repeatedly complained and expressed bitterness about their circumstances, blaming Moses for leading them out of Egypt.
- *Bitterness Towards Family Members:* Esau harbored bitterness towards Jacob (Genesis 27:41): Esau harbored bitterness against his brother Jacob for stealing his birthright and blessing.
- *Bitterness Towards Enemies:* Jonah harbored bitterness towards the Ninevites (Jonah 4:1-3).
- *Bitterness Towards Friends:* Job harbored bitterness towards his friends (Job 16:1-2, 19:2): Job expressed bitterness towards his friends for their accusations and lack of understanding during his suffering.
- *Bitterness Towards Betrayers:* David harbored bitterness towards Ahithophel (Psalm 55:12-14): David expressed deep hurt and bitterness over Ahithophel's betrayal.
- *Bitterness Towards Critics:* Elijah harbored bitterness towards the people of Israel (1 Kings 19:10): Elijah felt bitter and discouraged due to the criticism and rejection he faced from the Israelites.
- *Towards Ourselves:* Naomi (*Ruth 1:20-21*): After losing her husband and sons. Naomi expressed bitterness towards her own circumstances and indirectly towards herself.

### Places of Bitterness and Unforgiveness:

As you review the above list, prayerfully ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you any way you have harbored bitterness like those above, or other things like these that may not be mentioned on this list. Write down what the Holy Spirit brings to your remembrance.

## REPENT:

A working definition of repentance encompasses **experiencing godly sorrow over your sin** (2 *Corinthians 7.10*), turning away from that sin and turning towards the Lord (1 *Thess 1.9*), as well as bearing the fruit of genuine change (*Matt. 3.8*). The Lord extends mercy and forgiveness to the repentant (*Isaiah 55.7*).

After everyone has prayerfully considered the Bitterness Inventory, bring the group back together and cast vision for how to respond.

As we have identified places of bitterness and unforgiveness that have been a part of our past, or that we currently struggle with, we have an opportunity to experience the freeing power of Jesus as we confess and repent of these places of sin, receive forgiveness for extend forgiveness to others.

### **God’s Word gives us great encouragement about the power of repentance:**

- *2 Corinthians 7:10 (NIV):* “Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.”
- *Acts 3:19 (NIV):* “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.”
- *(2 Chronicles 7:14, NIV):* “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”

As we confess our sins and repent of them (forsake them) we will find fresh mercy, healing, forgiveness and cleansing in our lives and times of refreshing from God’s Spirit.

Use your inventory above and the guided prayer below to confess and repent of areas of bitterness and to receive the forgiveness and cleansing power of Jesus.

### **Guided Prayer of Confession, Repentance and Receiving Forgiveness:**

*Heavenly Father, I confess that I have harbored unforgiveness and bitterness against \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_. What they did to me made me feel \_\_\_\_\_ of the idols or \_\_\_\_\_ (name them specifically). I also realize that holding on to this worship \_\_\_\_\_ (evil and offense in our hearts) and all in \_\_\_\_\_ (name the enemy) has opened the door for the bondage of bitterness in my life. I choose today to forgive \_\_\_\_\_ (name them specifically), and I cancel \_\_\_\_\_ (name the enemy) from the bondage of bitterness through the liberating power of your blood. I receive your healing for my pain. I commit \_\_\_\_\_ into your hands and ask for your best in their life in Jesus name.*

### **Is there anything you need to do to practically as a next step in bearing the fruit of repentance?**

*Examples:*

- Joseph and his brothers (*Genesis 45*): While Joseph forgave his brothers and initiated reconciliation with his brothers who had sold him into slavery.
- Jesus and Peter (*John 21:15-19*): After Peter denied Jesus three times, Jesus forgave him and reinstated him as a disciple.
- Hosea and Gomer (*Hosea 3:1-3*): God instructed Hosea to forgive and take back his unfaithful wife, Gomer, symbolizing God’s forgiveness of Israel.
- In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told us to love our enemies (*Matthew 7.43-48*). Is there a practical act of love, the Holy Spirit would lead you to do as a way of living this out?

## REPLACE:

**Repentance leads to sin being replaced with new life, healing and renewal.**

Underneath our bitterness are places where we are brokenhearted by the pain done to us or those we love. When we release our bitterness, Jesus wants to replace it with healing for our broken hearts (Luke 4.18) that we might live out our calling to be peacemakers and ministers of reconciliation.

Use this guided prayer to receive a fresh healing in the place of our unresolved pain, anger and disappointment.

Jesus, thank you that you see my pain and want to heal me. As I release my bitterness and walk in forgiveness, I open up my heart and life to you in a fresh way and ask for you to heal my heart.

Take time to sit in silence for 1-2 minutes and listen to the Lord. Pay attention to what you sense the Holy Spirit doing in you and speaking to you during this time.

After a minute or two have each person in the group share what they sense the Spirit speaking or doing in them.

## RESTORE:

How are you going to walk forward and not return to the bondage of bitterness?

**As you go this week, meditate on these Scriptures:**

- *Ephesians 4:31-32* - "Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."
- *Matthew 5:7* - "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. 8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. 9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."