WEAVER STUDY GUIDES

The Sin of Bitterness

Study Guide

New Testament Studies

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A lesson-by-lesson companion for reading, discussion, and written responses.

Downloadable classroom edition | 8.5 x 11 inches

Name / group

Date

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Using this guide

Read the corresponding chapter, then work through the themes, arguments, and Scripture references.

Write your responses before discussing the questions with others. Use the application pages to identify a practical next step.

The study material is retained from the existing lecture study guides. Added writing prompts provide space for your own response.

Print at Actual Size / 100% on US Letter paper. Single-sided and double-sided printing are both suitable. Lessons begin on the next available page; no blank pages are inserted.

Reading assignments refer to the October 9, 2026 opening-heading corrected edition of the companion book. Online lecture links and QR codes are collected at the end.

LESSON 1

The Sin of Bitterness

Part One

February 11, 2007

Read Chapter 1 in the companion book, pages 5-23 (October 9, 2026 opening-heading corrected edition).

Major Themes

Primacy of Spiritual Sins in Believers

The sins of the saints are primarily sins of the spirit, such as bitterness, rather than physical sins, though believers are capable of both.

Lecture support: Weaver states, 'the sins of the saints are primarily sins of the spirit' and cites 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and 2 Corinthians 7:1 to show that believers are cleansed from fleshly sins but must also be cleansed from spiritual sins.

Bitterness as a Mark of the Unconverted

The Bible uses 'bitterness' to describe the lost, making its presence in a believer a contradiction.

Lecture support: Weaver references Deuteronomy 29:18, 32:32, Psalm 10:7 (cf. Romans 3:13-14), and Acts 8:23 (Simon the sorcerer) to show bitterness characterizes the ungodly.

Bitterness Directed Against God's Providence

Bitterness is ultimately an attack on God's sovereign dealings, not merely on people.

Lecture support: Weaver uses Esau's hatred of Jacob (Genesis 25, 27) to illustrate that Esau's bitterness was really against God's choice, saying, 'he didn't like God's dealings.'

Personal Responsibility for Bitterness

Bitterness is a personal sin; people and problems do not cause it - we cause it by unbiblical responses.

Lecture support: Weaver states, 'Neither people nor problems can make us bitter. We make ourselves bitter.' He cites Proverbs 4:23 and 25:28 on ruling one's spirit.

Incompatibility of Bitterness with Christian Faith

Bitterness is earthly, sensual, devilish, and makes genuine worship impossible; rejoicing in it is lying against the truth.

Lecture support: Weaver expounds James 3:14-16, saying bitterness 'makes real, genuine worship unacceptable,' and that glorying in it is lying against Scripture, Christ, and the Spirit.

Bitterness as a Barrier to Right Relationship with God

Bitterness makes it impossible to be right with God; one cannot produce both sweet and bitter fruit.

Lecture support: Weaver cites Ephesians 4:31-32 and James 3:11-12, concluding, 'If we're bitter and resentful... we can't be right with God.'

Key Arguments

Saints' primary sins are spiritual, not physical

Believers are cleansed from fleshly sins at conversion and are called to cleanse themselves from spiritual sins like bitterness.

Lecture support: Weaver contrasts 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 (such were some of you) with 2 Corinthians 7:1 (cleanse from filthiness of flesh and spirit) to argue that spiritual sins are the real problem for saints.

Bitterness is a characteristic of the lost

Scripture uses 'bitterness' to describe the unconverted, so its presence in a believer is an anomaly.

Lecture support: Weaver cites Deuteronomy 29:18, 32:32, Psalm 10:7 (cf. Romans 3:13-14), and Acts 8:23 to show bitterness describes the ungodly.

Bitterness is rebellion against God's sovereignty

Esau's hatred of Jacob was really resentment of God's choice, showing bitterness is directed at God's providential dealings.

Lecture support: Weaver analyzes Genesis 25 and 27, concluding, 'Esau was murmuring and complaining and was bitter and resentful against God, but he pointed at Jacob.'

Bitterness is a personal sin, not caused by others

We become bitter by our own unbiblical responses; removing people or problems does not cure bitterness.

Lecture support: Weaver states, 'Neither people nor problems can make us bitter. We make ourselves bitter,' and illustrates with Esau's unchanged heart after Jacob left.

Bitterness defiles many and spreads like an infection

Hebrews 12:15 warns that a root of bitterness troubles the individual and defiles many, showing its corporate impact.

Lecture support: Weaver explains, 'bitterness and resentment, although it may start with one individual, spreads like an infection.'

Bitterness makes worship and right relationship with God impossible

James 3:11-12 shows one cannot produce both sweet and bitter; bitterness must be put away (Ephesians 4:31) to be right with God.

Lecture support: Weaver says, 'If we're bitter and resentful... we can't be right with God,' and notes that holding onto bitterness leads to neglect of spiritual duties.

Scripture References

Hebrews 12:12-17

Primary text for the sermon series; read at the beginning and referenced throughout, especially verse 15 on the root of bitterness.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Used to show that the unrighteous (characterized by physical sins) will not inherit the kingdom, but believers are washed and sanctified from such sins.

2 Corinthians 7:1

Cited to emphasize cleansing from filthiness of the flesh and spirit, highlighting the need to address spiritual sins.

Ephesians 4:17

Quoted to show believers are not to walk as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind.

Deuteronomy 29:18

Warns against a root bearing gall and wormwood (bitterness) among the people, describing the unconverted.

Deuteronomy 32:32

Describes the wicked as having bitter clusters, comparing them to Sodom and Gomorrah.

Psalm 10:7

Describes the ungodly; compared with Romans 3:13-14 to show bitterness characterizes the lost.

Romans 3:13-14

Paul's quotation/allusion to Psalm 10:7, showing the ungodly are full of cursing and bitterness.

Acts 8:20-23

Peter tells Simon the sorcerer he is in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, showing bitterness marks the unconverted.

Genesis 25:22-34

Account of Esau selling his birthright; used to show Esau despised spiritual things and later became bitter.

Genesis 27:26-41

Jacob deceives Isaac for the blessing; Esau's bitter cry and hatred for Jacob, illustrating bitterness against God's providence.

Malachi 1:2-3

Referenced as God's statement, 'Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated,' affirming divine election.

Romans 9:13

Referenced alongside Malachi 1:2-3 regarding God's choice of Jacob over Esau.

Romans 5:1-5

Teaches that believers should glory in tribulations because they produce patience, experience, and hope.

1 Corinthians 10:13

God is faithful to not allow temptation beyond what we can bear and provides a way of escape.

James 1:2-4

Believers are to count it all joy when facing trials, knowing they produce patience and maturity.

Proverbs 4:23

Commands keeping the heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.

Proverbs 25:28

He that has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down without walls.

Proverbs 16:32

He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; he that rules his spirit than he that takes a city.

James 3:14-16

Bitter envying and strife is earthly, sensual, devilish, and leads to confusion and every evil work.

Study notes

Discussion Questions

1. Why does Weaver argue that the sins of the saints are primarily sins of the spirit? How does this challenge common perceptions of sin in believers?

Consider: Weaver introduces this concept early, using 1 Corinthians 6 and 2 Corinthians 7 to distinguish between physical and spiritual sins.

2. How does the Bible's use of 'bitterness' to describe the unconverted (e.g., Deuteronomy 29:18, Acts 8:23) affect our understanding of bitterness in a believer's life?

Consider: Weaver shows that bitterness is a mark of the lost, making it a contradiction in a saint.

3. In what ways was Esau's bitterness ultimately directed at God rather than Jacob? How does this apply to our own resentments?

Consider: Weaver uses the Esau narrative to illustrate that bitterness is an attack on God's providential dealings.

4. Weaver states, 'Neither people nor problems can make us bitter. We make ourselves bitter.' Do you agree? How does this truth change the way we handle offenses?

Consider: This statement is part of the argument that bitterness is a personal sin requiring personal repentance.

5. According to James 3:14-16, why is bitterness incompatible with genuine Christian worship? What does it mean to 'lie against the truth' when we glory in bitterness?

Consider: Weaver explains that bitterness is earthly, sensual, devilish, and that rejoicing in it is lying against Scripture, Christ, and the Spirit.

6. How does bitterness make it impossible to be right with God, according to James 3:11-12 and Ephesians 4:31-32? What practical steps can we take to put away bitterness?

Consider: Weaver argues that one cannot produce both sweet and bitter fruit; bitterness must be put off and replaced with kindness and forgiveness.

7. Weaver says that removing people or problems does not cure bitterness. Why is this true, and what is the biblical solution?

Consider: In the application, Weaver emphasizes that bitterness is a heart issue that requires repentance, not circumstantial change.

8. How does Peter's bitter weeping (Matthew 26:75) serve as a positive example in contrast to Esau's bitterness? What does true repentance from bitterness look like?

Consider: Weaver closes with Peter's repentance as a model of godly sorrow leading to change.

Applications

Examine your heart for spiritual sins

Believers should recognize that their primary sins are often spiritual, like bitterness, and not assume that avoiding physical sins is sufficient.

Lecture support: Weaver states, 'the sins of the saints are primarily sins of the spirit' and calls for cleansing from 'all filthiness of the flesh and spirit' (2 Corinthians 7:1).

Repent of bitterness as a personal sin

Rather than blaming people or circumstances, believers must take responsibility for their own bitter responses and repent.

Lecture support: Weaver says, 'We make ourselves bitter' and 'Bitterness and resentment are personal sins.'

Trust God's providence in difficult circumstances

Instead of resenting what God allows, believers should trust that He works all things for good and respond biblically to trials.

Lecture support: Weaver explains that bitterness is an attack on God's providence and that God intends problems to build character (Romans 5:3, James 1:2-4).

Put away bitterness through biblical obedience

Believers are commanded to put off bitterness, wrath, and anger, and put on kindness and forgiveness (Ephesians 4:31-32).

Lecture support: Weaver cites Ephesians 4:31-32 and emphasizes that bitterness must be 'put away from you.'

Guard against the spread of bitterness in the church

Because bitterness defiles many, believers must be vigilant to root it out personally and corporately.

Lecture support: Weaver warns from Hebrews 12:15 that a root of bitterness 'trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.'

Maintain spiritual disciplines to combat bitterness

Regular engagement with Scripture helps prevent sin; bitterness leads to neglect of Bible reading and church attendance.

Lecture support: Weaver quotes Moody: 'either this book will keep you from sin or sin will keep you from this book,' and notes that bitter people often drop out of services.

Respond to trials with joy, knowing they produce maturity

Believers should count trials as joy because they work patience and build biblical character.

Lecture support: Weaver references James 1:2-4 and Romans 5:3, urging believers to 'exalt, jump up and down in tribulations.'

Seek genuine repentance, not just removal of problems

True change comes from heart repentance, not from changing circumstances or people; like Peter, we must weep bitterly over our sin.

Lecture support: Weaver concludes with Peter's example and states, 'Removing people or removing problems will not help our bitterness.'

Study notes

Personal Application and Notes

Which application will you work on, and what specific step will you take?

What Scripture or teaching will you return to as you put this into practice?

Additional notes or questions to discuss

LESSON 2

The Sin of Bitterness

Part Two

February 18, 2007

Read Chapter 2 in the companion book, pages 25-43 (October 9, 2026 opening-heading corrected edition).

Major Themes

Bitterness as a response to chastening

Bitterness often develops when believers faint under God's discipline instead of responding biblically.

Lecture support: Weaver explains that fainting under chastisement leads to apostasy, and bitterness is connected to failing in the grace of God (Hebrews 12:5-15).

Self-examination and vigilance

Believers are commanded to diligently examine themselves to prevent bitterness from taking root.

Lecture support: Weaver emphasizes 'looking diligently' (episkopeo) as a call to self-examination, citing 2 Corinthians 13:5.

The contagious nature of bitterness

Bitterness not only troubles the individual but defiles many, spreading like poison.

Lecture support: Weaver states that bitterness is like cancer or venom, and the word 'trouble' implies a poisonous plant that corrupts others.

Failing in the grace of God

Christians can become deficient in grace by not submitting to God's Word, neglecting spiritual disciplines, and hardening their hearts.

Lecture support: Weaver lists five ways believers fail in grace, including not persevering in prayer and Bible study, and hardening hearts as in the provocation.

The example of Esau as a warning

Esau's profane attitude and bitterness led to his rejection and a wasted life, serving as a cautionary tale.

Lecture support: Weaver describes Esau as a fornicator and profane person who sold his birthright and later found no place of repentance.

Key Arguments

Bitterness is an attack on God's providence

Resentment ultimately reflects anger at God's sovereign dealings, as seen in Esau's anger at Jacob.

Lecture support: Weaver states that bitterness is 'an attack upon God and His providential dealings' and that Esau was really angry at God.

Fainting under chastening leads to apostasy

When believers faint under trials, they become unable to discharge duties, leading to neglect and potential denial of the faith.

Lecture support: Weaver uses his fainting experience to illustrate how fainting renders one unable to obey commands, paralleling spiritual fainting.

Bitterness stems from unbiblical responses to problems

The root of bitterness grows from a seed sown when problems are not handled scripturally.

Lecture support: Weaver says, 'The seed is a failure on our part to respond and act biblically to our problems.'

Bitterness often manifests over trivial matters

When bitterness springs up, it is often triggered by insignificant incidents, revealing a deeper issue.

Lecture support: Weaver gives examples like toothpaste squeezed from the wrong end, stating 'The problem is not the problem. Bitterness and resentment are the problem.'

Unrepented bitterness leads to a wasted life

Like Esau, those who hold onto bitterness miss God's blessings and cannot undo the damage.

Lecture support: Weaver says, 'There is no way to undo a wasted life' and references the song 'Wasted Years.'

Scripture References

Hebrews 12:12-17

Primary text of the sermon, read at the beginning and expounded throughout.

Acts 8:23

Peter tells Simon the sorcerer he is in the gall of bitterness, showing bitterness describes the unconverted.

Hebrews 12:4-11

Preceding passage on chastening, read to show the connection to bitterness.

Isaiah 35:3-6

Quoted to show that 'weak hands and feeble knees' refer to the heart and spirit.

Romans 12:18

Cited to support following peace with all men as much as possible.

2 Corinthians 13:5

Used to emphasize the call to self-examination.

Jeremiah 17:9

Mentioned to show the heart is deceitful, necessitating close examination.

Hebrews 3:12-13

Warns against an evil heart of unbelief and exhorts daily to avoid hardening through sin.

Hebrews 3:15

Quoted to show hardening hearts as in the provocation, linked to bitterness.

Numbers 32:23

Quoted to affirm that sin will be found out.

Ephesians 4:26

Command not to let the sun go down on wrath, applied to daily resolution of problems.

Genesis 25, 26, 27

Referenced as the account of Esau selling his birthright and losing the blessing.

Romans 9:13

Alluded to in 'Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated' to show God's sovereign choice.

Study notes

Discussion Questions

1. How does fainting under God's chastening lead to bitterness and potential apostasy?

Consider: Weaver explains that fainting renders us unable to obey, leading to neglect and eventual denial of faith.

2. What are practical ways we can 'look diligently' to prevent bitterness in our hearts?

Consider: The sermon calls for self-examination and close watching over our spirits.

3. In what ways do Christians today fail in the grace of God, and how can we avoid these pitfalls?

Consider: Weaver lists five ways, including neglecting Scripture and hardening hearts.

4. Why does bitterness often manifest over trivial matters, and how can we address the root cause?

Consider: Weaver notes that small incidents trigger deep-seated bitterness.

5. How does Esau's example serve as a warning for believers today regarding bitterness and wasted lives?

Consider: Esau's profane attitude and loss of blessing illustrate the consequences of unrepented sin.

Applications

Respond biblically to trials

Instead of fainting under pressure, believers should strengthen their spiritual posture and obey God's Word.

Lecture support: Weaver urges, 'Strengthen yourself, renew your mind, renew your obedience, renew your faith, you walk in the way that God has commanded you.'

Practice daily self-examination

Regularly inspect your heart for any seed of bitterness and deal with it immediately.

Lecture support: Weaver commands, 'Look diligently in your spirit, in your mind, in your disposition, in your attitude, to make sure there's no bitterness.'

Resolve conflicts quickly

Do not let the sun go down on your anger; settle problems daily to prevent bitterness from taking root.

Lecture support: Weaver applies Ephesians 4:26, saying, 'Husbands and wives should never go to bed mad.'

Pursue peace and holiness regardless of others

Do right even if others do wrong, and let any separation be on their part, not yours.

Lecture support: Weaver states, 'You do right regardless of what someone else does.'

Avoid a wasted life by repenting of bitterness

Repent of bitterness and resentment to avoid missing God's blessings and living with regret.

Lecture support: Weaver warns, 'If we don't repent and deal with our bitterness... we'll turn out with a wasted life.'

Personal Application and Notes

Which application will you work on, and what specific step will you take?

What Scripture or teaching will you return to as you put this into practice?

Additional notes or questions to discuss

Online Lecture Resources

Scan a code or select the lecture link in the PDF. The original lecture identifiers and destinations are preserved.

Lesson 1: The Sin of Bitterness - Part One

Lecture JW00893

Open the formatted lecture online

https://weaverbiblecollege.com/transcript.php?library=weaverbiblecollege&lecture=JW00893&transcript=ai&pc_view=formatted

Lesson 2: The Sin of Bitterness - Part Two

Lecture JW00892

Open the formatted lecture online

https://weaverbiblecollege.com/transcript.php?library=weaverbiblecollege&lecture=JW00892&transcript=ai&pc_view=formatted

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Source information

Study material: existing Major Themes, Key Arguments, Scripture References, Discussion Questions, and Applications from the corresponding Weaver Bible College lecture records. Original lecture titles and provenance are retained in those source records.

Layout upgraded September 30, 2026. Original manuscripts, study-guide data, and previous PDFs have not been changed.