

**HOSTAGE
BITTERNESS**

The BIG Idea Team, Individual and Family Study Guide

Please take time to run through this study guide with your team, on your own, or with your family so that you can further apply and process the BIG Idea.

Big Idea:

Forgiveness rooted in God is the key to letting go of bitterness.

Key Verse:

Read Hebrews 12:14-15.

Work at getting along with each other and with God. Otherwise you'll never get so much as a glimpse of God. Make sure no one gets left out of God's generosity. Keep a sharp eye out for weeds of bitter discontent. A thistle or two gone to seed can ruin a whole garden in no time.

The Scoop:

In order to overcome bitterness we must first acknowledge the problem and kill the root cause. If we think of bitterness as weeds in a garden like the Bible says, we can understand that weeds choke out the good things we are trying to produce. With weeds, it's easy to be fooled by pulling the tops out of the ground and expecting to have solved the problem. The key in any garden is to eliminate the roots by digging them up or spraying them with a weed killer. Many of us have been hurt in ways that seem impossible to forgive and we don't want to forgive, but if we can remember that no matter how bad the hurt, bitterness prevents us from producing positive results and feelings. The pain of bitterness will grow and affect all aspects of our lives (trust, relationships, hope, etc.) if we do not ask God to help us to forgive.

1. What are some typical responses we have to being hurt?
2. How have you seen bitterness affect your life or the life of someone you know?
3. Do you feel like you've gotten better or worse when it comes to bitterness, as you've gotten older?

What's Next? (take home/further processing/application)

Don't forget the truths taught in this week's message. If you identified someone in your life that you need to forgive, take steps to forgive him or her. Pray for them and ask God to bless them. Pray for strength to let the pain go and live in freedom from bitterness. Ask someone you trust to pray with you and share with him or her how you are doing.