

5 Steps to Digging Out a Root of Bitterness

Step 1 PRAY

Ask God to show you if you have any bitterness in your heart. The key is to be really honest with Him. Remember, He loves you, and whatever He reveals He's going to help you deal with. He wants to set you free of anything holding you back from experiencing all the peace He has for you. Also, ask Him for wisdom in how to handle the situation (James 1:5).

Step 2 Write

1. First, in an unedited way write down all the things you may be frustrated with or upset about a particular situation. Be as specific as possible. The purpose is to bring the darkness into the light so it can be exposed and dealt with. This makes sure you are doing your part to "get rid of all bitterness, rage, and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice" (Eph. 4:32).

It's advisable to destroy or shred this journaling after you've finished writing, in order to prevent others from seeing it and to prepare yourself to let these thoughts and feelings go.

2. Secondly, transform the unedited journaling into respectful language. Get key points down in a concise manner.

Step 3 Pray

Pray again that God will give you the courage to speak the truth in love in a calm and respectful manner, and that you not get defensive no matter how your spouse responds. Also, before Step 4, pray for God to show you all the positive attributes of your spouse.

Step 4 Speak

Explain your grievance to your spouse in a calm, assertive manner, being concise and factual, and avoiding criticisms and put-downs. Don't be afraid to respectfully make a request. Remember, your job is to "speak the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15), not to make him or her understand.

Step 5 Release

Let go of the situation and release it into God's hands. Even if your spouse does not respond positively to your words, you are doing your part to "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). Trust God to work on your relationship behind the scenes.