

# BETTER OR BITTER

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**These 4 lessons will help you to:**

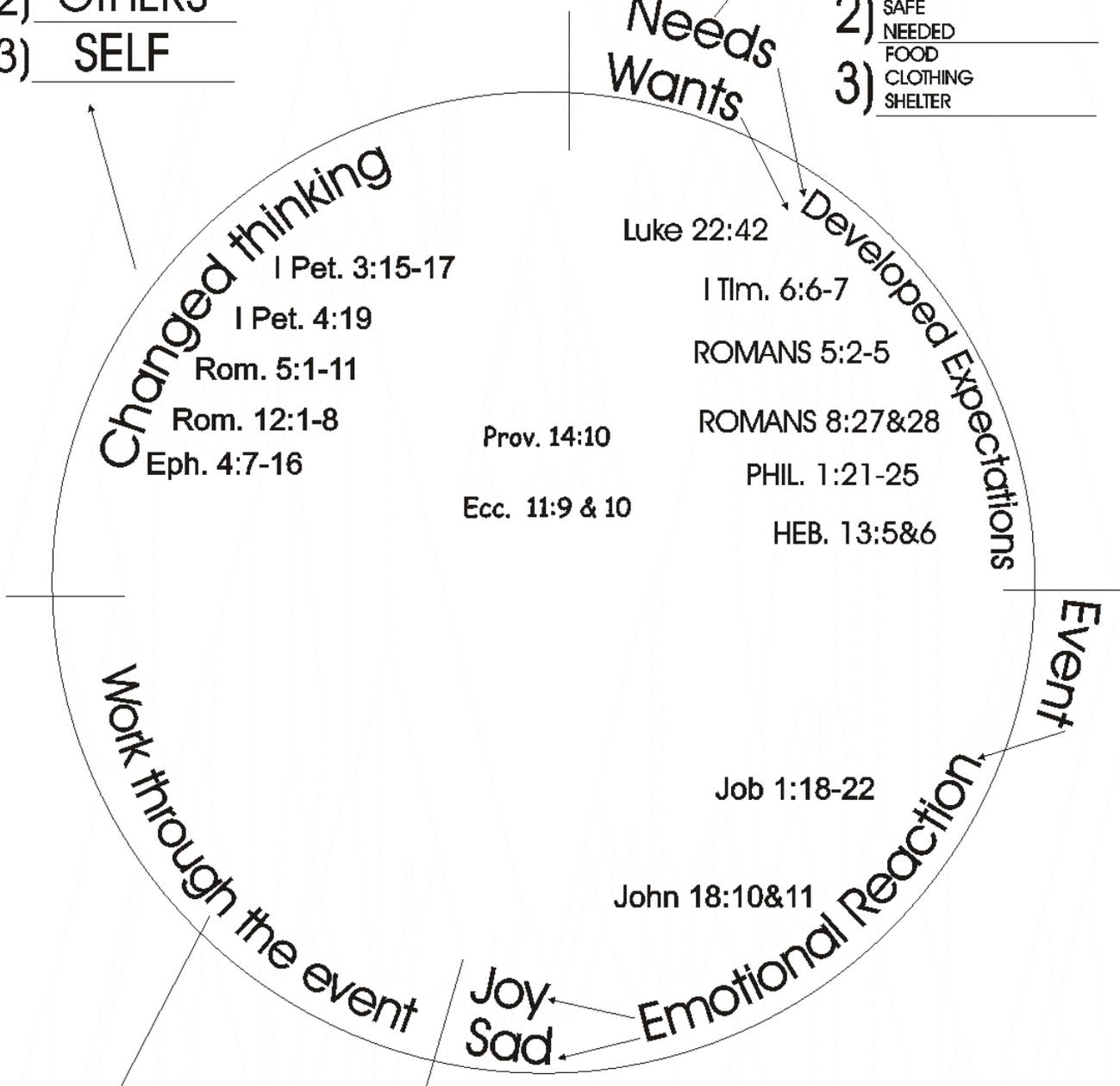
- Heal past emotional wounds and turn them into ministry potential instead
- Understand how both positive and negative events can hurt our walk with Christ if we react to them unbiblically
- Develop expectations about needs and wants that are biblically based
- Develop self control so your initial reactions to events will be more Christ-like

# Will Life Make You Better or Bitter?

- 1) GOD
- 2) OTHERS
- 3) SELF

WHAT MAKES A BABY CRY?

- 1) TO KNOW GOD  
TO KNOW HIS WILL  
TO KNOW HIS PLEASURE
- 2) LOVED  
SAFE  
NEEDED
- 3) FOOD  
CLOTHING  
SHELTER



- Joy**
- + Gratefulness / humility / worship / content / love
  - Pride / boasting / wanting more / bragging
- 
- Sad**
- + Patience / teachable / Thy will be done / forgiveness / love
  - Anger / bitterness / revenge / jealousy / detachment

- 1) Topical Bible study
- 2) Prayer (honest)
- 3) Counselors (Godly with Bible verses)

GAL. 5:19-24 PS. 75:6&7 JAMES 3:13-18 ROMANS 13:8-10 I COR. 4:6&7 MATT. CHAP. 5-CHAP. 7 Luke 22:42

# Will life make you better? Or will it make you bitter?

- God's will for our **experiences** is to make us **better** and more **mature**
- If we **react poorly** to the things that **happen to us**, instead of being better we will end up **bitter, angry, and alone**
- We have all met people that we would describe as **having lost hope**. These people are experiencing **burnout**
- We find that this happens **slowly** over a **period of time**, and possibly through **one or more significant events in their past**
- They have **never learned** how to **work through** these past events in a **positive way**

When talking to people who have become bitter we often find 3 things:

- They don't try anymore because they don't believe in themselves
- They won't reach out to others because they trust no one
- They expect everything to just get worse because they feel that God is just out to get them

## Steps for revisiting past events with the Lord:

- 1) Don't do it unless you know it's hurting the quality of your life now.
- 2) Start by praying for the strength to look at it fully.
- 3) What were your original expectations before the event? Phil. 3:13-14 and Psalm 30
- 4) What happened - just the facts?

- 5) What was your initial reaction like?
- 6) What bible verses speak about this event?
- 7) Write out your wrong reaction.
- 8) What is the right way to react?
- 9) Commit yourself to acting out the truth.
- 10) Go to key people in your life and admit that what you did was wrong. Ask them to pray for you now that you are trying to deal with it correctly.
- 11) Consider how this new reaction should change your opinion of God - Others - Others
- 12) What are your new expectations for the future?
- 13) What ministry potential does this now create that will glorify Christ?

**Psalm 51:1-13**

Have **mercy** on me, O God, according to your **unfailing love**; according to your **great compassion** blot out my transgressions. **2 Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.**

**3** For I know **my** transgressions, and my sin is **always before me**. **4 Against you, you only, have I sinned** and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge. **5** Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. **6** Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place.

**7** Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; **wash me, and I will be whiter than snow**. **8** Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. **9** Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.

**10 Create in me a pure heart**, O God, and renew a **steadfast spirit within me**. **11** Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. **12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation** and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

**13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways**, and sinners will turn back to you.

## **How can we prevent our becoming bitter the longer we live?**

**I would like to explain the circle diagram that is included here. If we started at the top and go around the circle clockwise, we would end up back the top. But when we get back around to the top of the circle we will have changed, for better or for worst.**

**Let me try to explain as we travel in life how we are changed. Everyone has things that they hope for. Dreams, we all have them. We have all learned from experience things that we would like to have happen again. We all have learned from experience what things we would like to avoid it at all possible. If we are wise we have learned what things we need a physically, emotionally, and spiritually. If we are wise we will have also learned the difference between things that we want and the bare minimum things that we need. We will call the listed things that we hope for expectations. We all have expectations, they are very unique. No two people have the same expectations in life because we are different and have experienced different things. Ask yourself this question, "are my expectations this same now as they were five years ago?" Why are they different, what has caused them to change? Are my expectations more realistic now than they were? If my expectations were higher or lower when I be happier? Do I have any control over my expectations? How are the expectations of a child different from those of an adult? How or the expectations of the young adult different from an older adult? How are the expectations different for a person who is far from God, and has never learned his principals from the Bible on how to live different from a person who prays and learns how to view life from gods pointed view? Do we have any control on how are expectations will be a year from now?**

**The next section on the circle is called "first reactions". We go out into life with our expectations and all the sudden an event take place. Someone says something happens. We have a meeting, a phone call, or we receive band news in the mail. When any event takes place in our life we will have a first reaction to it. Some people would call this first reaction a spontaneous of emotional response. If the event meets or exceeds our expectations are spontaneous emotional response will be joy. If the event of falls short of our expectations our first the emotion will be sadness. We see this all the time with children. They have not large how to hide their spontaneous emotional responses. When something happens that makes them happy they'd jump around, Clap their hands, and shout. We adults have learned to guard our reactions. We have all made fools of ourselves in front of others, so we hide our feelings so that others won't make fun of us. We have also learned to be careful about what we say when we first feel a motion rising up inside of us, because we have all said things that have hurt others or made them angry. It is sad that part of growing up in our society means that we are usually surrounded by people that are not our friends. Surrounded by people that will take advantage of us if they think they understand how we really feel, this is unfortunate. There is one very good thing about adults guarding or limiting their reaction to**

events. The reason that it is good to some extent is that we have also learned that our initial reaction to events is quite often incorrect. We have all seen ourselves feel and react quite differently to something later than when it first happens. I have hurt it said and I believe it to be true that our initial reaction is seldom the same as our final conclusion. One of the marks of a mature person is that from wisdom and experience we are able to have better initial reactions that are more in line with the truth that will be the final conclusion. When we are more mature we will make fewer mistakes based on taking action of any kind during our spontaneous emotional reactions to events.

The next section on our circle I call working through. Everyone works through life's events differently. Some people rethink and spend much time trying to figure out how to react. They spend large amounts of time trying to figure out how to react even to very small events in life. Other people quickly dismiss events that they don't totally understand. They spend almost no time trying to work through their reactions. Both of these could be considered the extremes. Most of the time we need to take some time to work through our reactions so that we can learn and grow. To ponder events too long, and with too great a detail we will become perfectionists and out of touch with reality. To give little thought to our reactions will cause us to become detached and distant from others emotionally. Both extremes need to be avoided. So how should we work through our feelings and reactions to the events in our lives. We must each of us work through life's events based on our worldview, or more simply put the principles and beliefs that we live by and hold to be true. For myself I believe that the best worldview, principles, values, absolute truth come from God's word the Bible. So let's say that I am an expert on all the content found in the Bible. Will knowledge alone. Will I react correctly to life's situations? Of course not. I still have a free will. Just because I know what to do doesn't mean that I will do it. If I don't take time to think and praying about what I believe I may never mature and grow. I also will never learn that I have made mistakes, go back and correct them and learn for the future. I will leave the trail of hurt people, damaged relationships, and other unrepaired damage throughout my life.

Let's breakdown our working through events into two categories. How do we work through an event that brings us joy because it meets or exceeds our expectations? And No. 2 how do we work through events that make us sad because they fall short of our expectations?

I believe that whether events cause us joy or sadness we can learn how to have put a positive reaction in our lives after we have worked through them. If this is true and it is, then we can also without realizing learn to have very native reactions to life's events over and over again. Many people learned years ago a set of values that don't work. And they are still working through life's events with a very negative outcome in their life. Let me give you a simple example that will help you visualize what I am talking about. Let's say that you have a job, if

**you want one I hope you have one. Let's say that at the job you are hoping for a raise. You have been working there for while, and your work is good. You have seen others receive a raise recently and you hope that you will be next. So what is your expectations? And wide you have this expectation? Let's say that you're really struggling with your home budget and you haven't figured out that you need a 50 cents an hour raise. Your expectation is based on need, and you feel that 50 cents in a fair. Each day you go to work hoping that the boss will call you into his office, set you down, and inform you of your new raise. Let's take a look at this example and your reaction to it in several different ways.**

**No. 1 months go by and your boss never called you into his office. Your expectation is not being met. You have moved from sad too frustrated to a little upset. Finally you go to the boss and asked to speak him. When you two talk, he tells you that there is several areas then needy improvement in your work before you will receive a raise. If you thought you were sad before, now you're really bombed out. At this point you are having your spontaneous promotional response, I would be to. But is it possible to have to quite different and results to this event? One that is positive and will do you good. And one that is negative and will do you harm? A positive response to this said situation would be to respond to the value called humility. This is a positive response to a saddling situation. A humble person will thank the boss for his honesty. On person will tell his boss that he will look for ways to improve. A humble person would ask is boss to let you know if he sees improvement. A humble person will admit to himself that even though he feels good about the job he's doing that he can improve. A negative reaction to this sad event could be to respond in anger. To say things to the boss that would be defensive. To begin to compare himself to the other workers. Reacting negatively at this time could damage your relationship with the boss, postponed the raise even longer, and maybe even cost you your job. So in example one we see that you can positive improve your relationship of the boss, improve your work, gain more respect from your coworkers and receive a raise later. Or you can react native late and have just the opposite happened.**

**No. 2 after a short period of time the boss does call you into his office. He pays you a short complement and informs you of a 75-cent and our raise. This event causes you joy. It is also possible for you to have a positive or a negative and result to this event. If you respond positively you will express thankfulness. You will express to your boss the enjoyment that you have working for him, and tell him that you have learned things from him and qualified you for this raise. You might also express gratitude to one or more of your coworkers who have helped you along the way. When you respond like this the boss will now you as a person who has a good attitude and is a team player. A native response to destroy full event could also take place. You could respond with pride. If you respond with pride you might say something like "well it's about time." You might also begin to brag to the boss about all the things that you have done for the company. You might even be so proud as to tell the boss how much easier you have made his job too. When you respond like this the boss will now value you as a jerk. He will trust you less. He will be a lot less likely to ever trust you because**

he questions your motives. When others in the office find out how you feel about yourself and them your relationship with them will be damaged.

By this example we can see that whether the events in our life meet or fall short of our expectations we can still do well or poorly based on the end result in our hearts and how we've react to events.

The last section on our circle is called changed in thinking and changed motivation. As we experience events and our lives, and we respond either negatively or positively we will be changed. Let's go back to our example of the raise on the job. And let's look at three areas where are thinking and motives will be changed.

Area 1 our confidence in others. Let's say that you started this new job feeling good about your boss and coworkers. You trust them. Whether you receive the raise or not, if you respond negatively with pride if you get the raise or anger if you don't this will affect the way you think about your coworkers and your boss. When you respond negatively you are going to trust them less. You will feel more alone, and you will guard your feelings more than you did before. You're ability to work happily with them will decrease. If we respond negative to life's events we will slowly over time begin distrust all people around us. There is the big difference between knowing who to trust and when to trust, and ending up in life as a person who almost never trusts others.

Area 2 our confidence in ourselves. Let's say that you start this new job feeling good about your ability. You feel competent, and well suited to this new company. You believe that you have the ability to grow, to adapt, and become a valued part of the team. If you respond negatively with pride, anger or any other negative reaction you will damage the way you feel about yourself. You will begin to say things to yourself like, I can't do this job. I'll never are a promotion, I'm not smart enough. I can't trust myself, I'm always doing or saying the wrong thing. I'm lucky to even have a job. I know that might coworkers just put up with me, but they were all be happy if I quit. If we respond negatively to life's events we will into a viewing ourselves as worthless failures. Our hope in our ability to improve and change for the better will be lost. If over a period of years the react negatively we will stop trying and lay down to die.

Area three our confidence in God. Let's say that we start this new job feeling like God has answered our prayers. That God is going to bless us that this new job and help our work to be good. But say that we have asked God to give us good relationships with our coworkers

and our boss. Let's say that we have asked God not only for raise someday the even promotions up through the company. If we're react negatively through pride anger bitterness selfish this revenge gossip we will not have our prayers answered. But instead of us realizing that the reason our prayers have not been answered is our fault. We will fail recognize that our own native reaction to events on the job have brought failure on our own head. Instead of seeing the reality of our situation because we are reacting negatively, we will begin to feel that God has abandoned us. We will say things like, God doesn't really hear my prayers anymore. I thought God had opened doors for this job but now I wonder. I was told that God loves me that now I'm not so sure. If we go through life responding negatively to life's events we will end up not having much faith in God.

We have all met people that we would describe has been burnout. But what to me mean when we say that about them? What we're probably trying to describe as they were looking at a person who has lost hope. If we would talk to this burnout person we would find that slowly over a period of time, and possibly through one or more significant events in their past that they never worked through them in a positive way. And we now find ourselves talking to a person who doesn't trying anymore because they do believe in themselves. Who won't reach out to others because they trust no one. And who expects everything to just get worse because they feel that God is just out to get them. They are a burnout.

In the same way we have all met people who have gone through many of life's events and yet they seem happier, and more optimistic than ever. And they have maturity and a practical wisdom about how to deal with reality. What is made the difference for this person? Upon talking to them we find the same events in their past, the same events that have caused many others to burnout did yet they are better. Why? I believe that the answer for one person's burnout and another once optimism has little to do with events in life. I'm not saying that some people get dealt such a band hand in life that it makes optimism very difficult. What I am saying is that it is far more important for us to deal positively with life's events based on proper values, then it is for person to always have only positive things happened to them.

I have described how when a person responds negatively on the job there confidence in themselves, others, and God diminish. In the same way when we've respond positively to events not only on the job but in all areas of life, our confidence in others, self and God increase. To go the one-way is to burnout. To go the other way is to be happy.

This brings us back up to the top of our circle. Because we have been around the circle once with various events in our life we will now develop different expectations then we had before we started. Whether our new expectations are more mature and realistic than before will be determined by whether we have responded positively or negatively to the events of the past.

Whether or not our expectations are based more on our real needs vs. Once will also be determined by how we have learned from the past. I will confess at this time that it my age 42, married for over twenty years, six children, my own business, ministry work in the church, and a whole lot more I had hand lots of time to go around and around this circle many times. I will also confess that I had gone through events and have been changed for the worse. I had had to go back and look at my reactions that were negative. I have had to go back and respond positively and by a doing that I have found my confidence in God, others, and myself partially restored. I will also confess that on many occasions I had gone through lives events and because I am understood the correct biblical principles and values that I have gone through many of lights events and come out better. I could list for you as many events in my life that have fallen way short of my expectations. I can also list before you many events were I have been blessed. I will also confess that I know no one and I do not every expect to meet anyone who has gone through life very long and not made many mistakes in their re-actions to life events. You also recognize that we all have done wrong to others and them to us. You also recognize that we have all failed to do what we know God expects from us. So the trick in life is not to try to never fail God or others, that's not possible. It's also not trying to find a place to live where others will always do good to us, that's also not possible. The way that we go through life to be better and not bitter is by learning how to react positively to the events of our lives.

So let me try to some up what this circle is all about. We start out in life not really knowing what we need. We start out in life that really knowing what to expect. Various events begin to happen to us and we begin to feel emotions. When we are young we're react to events and make more mistakes because we are too spontaneous. When we are young we don't take the time to go back and work through our first reactions. As we mature wheel are the value of going back and looking at our past thinking, motives, and actions. We develop a set of values that help us to test whether we have reacted positively or negatively to life. We are willing to change and learn, or we develop habits that's slow our learning life. Our set of principles and values expand and our experience in applying them to our life improves. We recognize that there is the connection between how we feel about life and our reactions to past events. I believe that it is God's will then as we go through life we should look to him and the absolute truth found in the Bible as the values that determine our choices. I also believe that because Sin is in us and all around us, that we will all experience bad things in our lives. I have listed a few Bible vs. That speak to the process in the choices but I have described here.