



## Connect Group Study

A Life Question #3 “Who shares my tough stuff” series

Week 4: September 15-21, 2019

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# CONNECT [ ] GROUPS

### Strand #2 FAITHFUL OTHERS – a Cure for Bitterness

The tough stuff biography of *RUTH*

In week 4 of *A CORD OF THREE STRANDS*, our focus is on the quietly incredible story of RUTH. This week's teaching targeted this truth: **When the tough stuff of life has embittered the heart, faithful lovingkindness (God's through God's people) can provide the remedy.**

**GETTING STARTED** – Do you know the difference between “anger” and “bitterness”? Discuss these questions:

- How would you describe a bitter person?
- When encountering someone trapped in bitterness, what can you likely conclude happened?
- Why do you think it is so difficult for some (perhaps all of us) to move beyond bitterness?
- What's dangerous about becoming bitter?

**IN THE SCRIPTURES** – In this week's teaching, the widow Naomi had become embittered for all that God had allowed (or caused) to happen in her life. Having lost hope for anything good in the future, she returned home to Bethlehem deeply angry at God. Let's explore what Scripture teaches about bitterness, and how to get out of its quagmire.

**CAUSES** – often someone becomes bitter as the result of poor choices which lead to difficult outcomes.

- What poor choice did Esau make? (Genesis 25:29-34) What outcome did he experience? (Hebrews 12:15-17; see the backstory in Genesis 27:30-38).
- Ecclesiastes 7:25-26 speaks of another poor choice? What is it, and what are the outcomes? (cf. read Proverbs 7)
- Job's heart became bitter (see Job 10:1, 23:2, 27:2). What caused his bitterness?
- What was behind Jerusalem's experience of bitterness? (Jeremiah 9:12-16) What choices had God's people made?
- What poor choices did Peter make, leading to his bitterness? (Matthew 26:69-75)

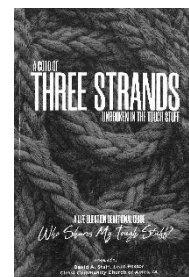
**CURES** – how can someone break free from the bonds of bitterness?

- The early Hebrew believers faced much “tough stuff” which could have embittered them. What “cures” are offered in the letter to them? (see both Hebrews 12:7-11 and Hebrews 12:12-15) How is the truth of finding strength in a “three strand cord” found in these verses?
- How did Peter find relief from the bitterness of his failure? (John 21:15-19) How important is confession in dealing with the bitterness of failure?
- How does Paul address the problem of dealing with bitterness? (Ephesians 4:31-5:2) How important are “other strands” in the successful dealing with bitterness?

**SOME TIME TO APPLY** - “letting go of bitterness; replacing it with humble joy and peace”

So very often, a bitter person has nurtured long-term anger at some one or some circumstance that has deprived him/her of something thought deserved. People can be angry at God, or at others, for some injustice, and demand restitution. Yet almost all who have studied embittered people offer a different way out of bitterness' prison. Rather than seeing oneself as a “victim,” better to

- ♦ Humble oneself (recognize that God had a larger purpose in this)
- ♦ Confess an unrepentant heart, and ask God for forgiveness
- ♦ Release the “idolized” hurt and demanding spirit, and find rest in the grace of Christ Jesus



**FINISH** – Is there any bitterness toward God or someone else that you need to “release” in repentance? Is there someone you know who needs to be released from their prison-cell of bitterness? Take time to pray for one another.