**"Guard Your Hearts" (Proverbs 4:23)**

**Lesson 10: Guard Your Heart from Bitterness/Resentment**

* **Scripture**: Heb. 12:15
	+ **Other Scripture References**:
		- Eph. 4:31-32; Mark 11:25
* Definition of bitterness: A deep-seated resentment or anger resulting from being hurt, wronged, or disappointed.
* Bitterness is like a root: It starts hidden but grows and spreads, affecting you and others.
* Guarding against bitterness is a matter of guarding your heart (Proverbs 4:23).

**The Dangers of Bitterness**

1. Spiritual Poison – Hebrews 12:15 - It defiles many and leads to trouble.
2. Blocks God's Grace – Unforgiveness hardens the heart.
3. Destroys Relationships – Ephesians 4:31
4. Steals Joy and Peace – A bitter heart cannot rejoice.

**Biblical Examples**

1. Cain (Genesis 4:5–8) - Bitterness led to murder.
2. Esau (Hebrews 12:16–17) - Regret without repentance.
3. Naomi (Ruth 1:20) - “Call me Mara (bitter)” — but she didn’t stay bitter.
4. Absalom (2 Samuel 13–15) - Let bitterness fester into rebellion.

**How to Guard Your Heart Against Bitterness**

1. **Recognize It Early** - Acknowledge the emotion before it grows (James 1:19–20)
2. **Release the Offense -** Ephesians 4:31–32 – “Be kind…forgiving one another…”
3. **Rely on God’s Justice -** Romans 12:19 – “Vengeance is mine, I will repay…”
4. **Pray for Your Offender** - Matthew 5:44 – Love and pray for your enemies.
5. **Keep Perspective** - Genesis 50:20 – “You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good.”
6. **Fill Your Heart with God’s Grace** - Gratitude, worship, and humility displace bitterness.

**Discussion Questions**

1. What causes bitterness to take root in our hearts?
2. How does bitterness affect our relationship with God and others?
3. What are some practical ways to forgive and move forward?
4. How can we help others who are dealing with bitterness?