

July 2026

IN THE JETSTREAM

"The Outcome of Bitterness"

by Shea Oakley



"See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no 'root of bitterness' springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled." Hebrews 12:15 (ESV)

That line check captain who you know doesn't like you just made your check ride twice as difficult as any other captain, again. Your fellow ramp agent keeps using her seniority to push you into the worst possible shifts on the calendar. That senior flight attendant has been saying nasty things about your work to your fellow FA's during the entire trip, and that trip happens to be a very long-haul international one. It's all you can do, as a Christian, not to let bitterness lodge in your heart.

As fallen human beings we can harbor bitterness at home or at 35,000 feet. Whether it is directed towards someone within our closest family or at an airline colleague we only see occasionally the terrible fruit of this condition of the heart is the same in the end.

The Cold Logic of Bitterness

There is a certain cold logic to bitterness. Bitterness appeals most strongly to our sense of right and wrong, to our sense of fairness. Bitterness says that we have an ongoing right to hate those who have either hurt us or allowed us to be hurt by others. It is more interested in past losses than present and future gains. It spurns hope and doesn't care. When we are caught up in the self-indulgent throes of bitterness, we would rather lash out at a loving God who would "restore the years the locust has eaten" than allow Him to restore those years to us.

Unrepentant bitterness is one of the biggest barriers to whatever degree of healing we can know in this life. To be bitter is to, by definition, remain unhealed. We cannot heal from that which we refuse to give up. Much of the cure of the soul is dependent on surrender, the surrender of what ails us to God. We cannot be healed of physical infection unless we are willing to let the doctor touch and cleanse the wound. Bitterness is a sort of spiritual infection. If we are not truly willing to let God put His hands on this angry, hateful contamination of our heart, He cannot and will not heal us.

This wound analogy can be taken a step further. Imagine having an infected cut and purposely rubbing dirt into it. The result of such an action is to make the infection worse and potentially spread it throughout the body. Every time we choose to entertain bitterness, we are making the infection stronger

within us. This is the true insanity of holding on to angry unforgiveness. How many of us nurse a grudge? Every time we do, we are, in effect, sickening ourselves.

In fact, this same spiritual illness will eventually spread even if we do not actively make it worse by dwelling on it. Ignoring an infected injury ultimately has the same effect as feeding it. Acting as if it isn't there just draws out the period in which it does potentially irreparable damage to our lives. Bitter resentment is just as destructive when left to itself as it is when consciously indulged; it just takes longer to do the same damage. In the end bitterness simply cannot be allowed to be present in our lives if it is not to destroy us. It must, by grace-empowered decision and action, be forsaken.

The Sad Reality of Bitterness

But it cannot go if we are not willing to let God's grace in to help us let it go. The problem is we sometimes feel like we get something out of bitterness, maybe a certain perverse satisfaction in clinging to our hurts. The sad reality is that, on some level, those who remain bitter want to remain bitter. Perhaps it is a stubborn tendency to want to judge others. We do not want to release someone to the one true Judge so we hold onto what they have done to us and blame them for it in perpetuity. We would rather hate them than give in to a divinely inspired forgiveness that takes their punishment out of our hands. Such a state of heart only destroys us, but we do not care. We get some terrible false gratification from letting it define us. This is a particularly dark form of insanity.

The self-inflicted curse of bitterness spits in the face of both the healing and the Healer. It perpetuates wrong relationship with God, others and ourselves. It is idolatry because the "right" to be bitter is elevated above our absolute imperative to be obedient to God and forgive as He forgives. It is deeply wicked and incredibly destructive to our very souls.

Bitterness kills. ■

(This article was written by Shea Oakley. Shea is an aviation enthusiast who has been a part of FCAP for many years. He currently serves on staff as Principal Contributor for FCAP social media, FCAP Ministry Chaplain, and a member of our Board of Directors. Shea is also part of the leadership team for FCAP-NYC & EWR.)



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"If I ride the morning winds to the farthest oceans, even there Your hand will guide me, Your strength will support me."
Psalm 139:9-10

HERE IS MORE ABOUT SHEA'S NEW ROLE WITH US AS MINISTRY CHAPLAIN

- Feeling extra strain on or off the job?
- Trying to discern God's will and purpose for your life?
- Struggling with practical aspects of the Christian life?
- Have theological questions that haunt you?
- Struggling with anxiety and/or depression?
- Feeling isolated and alone?
- Is physical illness affecting your emotional health?
- Thinking about quitting work because things are tough?

If you need someone to talk and pray with about any of the above topics, please reach out to our Ministry Chaplain, Shea Oakley.



A Christ-follower for over 35 years, Shea holds degrees in Aviation Management (Florida Tech) and English Literature (Nyack College), as well as a Certificate of Theological Studies (Alliance Theological Seminary). Beyond his work in aviation ministry, Shea has written over 350 articles on Christian living, served as a mentoring pastor, and spent seven years as an online crisis coach. His true passion is coming alongside hurting believers to offer a listening ear and professional Christian life coaching.

Contact: shea@fcap.org

ONLINE Fellowship & Prayer

Men and Ladies (breakout groups)
1st and 3rd Tuesday of Each Month

Engaging in Prayer (everyone)
2nd and 4th Tuesday of Each Month
9:30 am ET

LINK for using computer for video
Meeting ID: 7704619320
Password: fcap1234

For audio only by phone, dial
+1 646 876 9923 US
Meeting ID: 7704619320
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ON ZOOM

CAMP SOAR ABOVE was an awesome success leading to new opportunities in the months to come, such as partnership with Wings of Grace in the formation of a Bible study with 20+ students interested in going deeper. There is also new commitment to involvement and financial sponsorship/assistance toward next year's camp. And much more is on the horizon. Enjoy these photos from the event (their faces say it all):



If you are planning to be at the EAA AirVenture in Oshkosh later this month, please stop by our two booths to visit with us. One booth is located under the IAMA Tent and the second is in Hangar D.

*We look forward to seeing you there
... and thank you for praying!*



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