

It would be 6 years in November 2010 since my divorce, yet that spring I had entered into another of 3 relationships since my divorce seeking love and acceptance that I again didn't find. The relationships were at least becoming shorter in duration, but also had begun to more quickly bring with them the all too familiar feelings of emptiness, disappointment and regret. My desire to be "loved" created an over-eager tendency to believe blackguards who said they "loved" me, but were really only interested in getting what they wanted.

The deception, disloyalty, disappointment and humiliation had taken its toll. Who was I and why was this happening to me? Why do I seem to be "stuck" in this rut of self-pity and disgrace? As a child of God, I knew I was meant for more...but how did I find my way out?

Earlier that year I had learned about The Hem of His Garment study and wondered if it was something that could help me? I missed the first sign up, but was drawn to try again late that summer.

In preparation for my testimony I had written many pages of thoughts about what might have happened in my life to "get me here." I knew my divorce, and the dissolution of my immediate family as a result, was a likely cause, but I had done counseling, attended group seminars, and read many "self-help" books. So I was certain it had to be something else that was "wrong" with me.

When it was my turn to testify, I was ashamed that I didn't have a "clear picture" of what was at the root of my challenges, and afraid that my classmates would think my troubles not worthy of this sort of effort—for which they were pouring out their souls. However Julie, one of my teachers and mentors, assured me that God had brought me there and He would bring everything into clear focus—I just had to be patient and do the work. The ladies in my study also graciously comforted me that I was meant to be there and fully supported my participation.

In my 6th week of study God enlightened me. Since my separation and divorce I had accumulated a "root of bitterness." It was so deeply embedded in me that it had become an intricate part of my being I didn't even realize was there...but it was consuming me.

According to Sue Liljenberg, author of The Hem of His Garment, "Bitterness accumulates if it is not dealt with God's way. Time does not deal kindly with bitter people. As years go by, bitterness does not decrease, it only increases...remembers details; it does not allow you to forget. Bitterness is resentment you have held onto and will continue to hold onto until it defiles your very soul.... We must always remember that wherever there is a root, there will eventually be a growth that shows above the surface. If you have a root of bitterness, you will bear bitter fruit, because the fruit born bears a direct relation to the root producing it."

Hebrews 12:14-15 says, "Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many."

That November evening, almost 6 years to the day of my divorce, God performed microscopic surgery on me...I truly felt the root being surgically removed—every last tentacle no matter how small or deep within my being. I was emptied of it all...I was lightened and my heart was opened. For a brief moment I felt free and void, but then an overwhelming sensation of being filled again... this time with goodness, joyousness and light from the glory and grace of the Holy Spirit.

Thank you great and glorious God for continually seeking me, unconditionally loving me, teaching me how to truly forgive, and showing me your incredible grace and love through your most precious sacrifice, Jesus Christ.

I know now God that it is your will that I forgive others as you have forgiven me, so that I can love others as you have loved me.

~ Susan Alexander
Hem of His Garment