

GOD'S REMEDY FOR AN UNFORGIVING HEART

(Ephesians 4:30-32)

The heart of a true Christian is no place for grudges. The Christian life is not to be characterized by hatred, animosity, retaliation and unforgiveness. When there is an unforgiving attitude in each one of us, there will be a fracturing of our relationship with God and with one another, a disruption of our unity as a church, a tarnishing of our testimony as believers, a reproach to the gospel of Christ and ultimately a dishonoring of the holy name of our God. Ephesians 4:30-32 provides the biblical remedy to this unforgiving attitude.

1. Prioritize your _____ with God.

The place to begin in resolving every conflict, quarrel and strife is to settle our relationship problem with God first. The apostle Paul spells out this divine priority when he said, "*And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption*" (Eph. 4:30). Paul brings to our minds how the Israelites had caused grief and sorrow upon the heart of God's Spirit when they chose to rebel against the Lord in spite of His steadfast love and goodness (Isa. 63:7-10). As New Testament believers, we must refrain from grieving the Holy Spirit for He is God's seal of ownership, pledge of security and divine guarantee of our full and final redemption and glorification.

2. Put away every sin that offends _____ and _____.

We grieve the Spirit of God when we commit sins that offend His holiness and disrupts the unity of His church (Eph. 4:1-2,30-31). Any unresolved conflict within the church, any unsettled dispute and discord in our relationships as brothers and sisters in Christ, grieves the heart of God and corrupts the unity of His family. Paul identifies the specific sins we must put away. He exhorts us: "*Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander be put away from you, along with all malice*" (Eph. 4:31). All these sins are evil and wicked offenses that displease our Lord and assaults His beloved church.

3. Put on Christlike virtues of _____.

We have totally displaced bitterness and unforgiveness from our hearts when we cultivate Christlike kindness, tenderheartedness and forgiveness towards those who offended us (Eph. 4:32; Matt. 5:44-45). The forgiveness we extend to others flows from what God has done for us in Christ (1 John 1:7,9). When we forgive, we make a commitment to God and to the ones who wronged us, "*I will no longer hold this sin and offense against you. I will not bring it up to you and to others again in the future and I will extend grace and kindness to you as I have received from God Himself.*" Forgiveness is the most Godlike and Christlike virtue any Christian could ever cultivate. And it is impossible for Satan to destroy the faith of a forgiven and forgiving Christian!
