

FIRE IN MY BONES: Break Free from Today's Fake Outrage Culture

Anger has reached the boiling point in our country. Why are people so on edge? Some experts note that we live in a politically polarized society where people view looting, arson or gun violence as acceptable means of expressing their anger.

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It has also become fashionable to lace conversations and social media posts with profanity. Whether it's regular TV programs, talk radio, political TV shows, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, online comment sections or street protests, we've developed the skill of dropping verbal bombs on each other.

We don't care how our words hurt people anymore. We've become vicious. Our love has turned to ice.

We are naïve if we don't recognize that this cold-hearted hatefulness is affecting Christians. I've noticed that believers today get offended more easily when something goes wrong at church.

The world tells us that ending a relationship is as easy as hitting the unfriend button or canceling a celebrity because of something he or she tweeted two decades ago. But when I read the Bible, I don't see any room for outrage, resentment, intolerance or "cancel culture." Jesus calls us to love—and He gives us the supernatural power to do it.

Have you considered ending a relationship recently? Did you

already walk out of a church, or break a close friendship, during the last few years? I know many people who have.

If so, examine your heart and ask these probing questions first:

» **Am I giving up too soon?** Your love will never grow unless it is stretched—and the best way to stretch your love is to show kindness when you feel like slamming a door in someone's face.

We often give up on relationships because we don't want to exert the energy to improve them. Relationships require a lot of work. When you cut ties with someone because they hurt you, you are missing an opportunity to become more like Christ. Show some patience. Choose to love even when you don't get anything in return. Act quickly to repair the relationship before it gets worse.

» **Would Jesus end this relationship?** When you end a friendship because of an offense, you are doing the exact opposite of what Jesus did for you. Ephesians 4:32 (MEV) says, "Be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you." You will never understand God's merciful love if you don't show it to others.

Jesus loved us even when we were sinners, and He patiently drew us to Himself using "ropes of kindness and love," (b, NLT). Before you end a friendship, judge a pastor, storm out of a church or "cancel" someone, remember how aggressively Jesus pursued a relationship with you. Let His ropes of kindness pull you out of your bad attitude.

When Peter asked Jesus how many times we are required to forgive a person, Jesus answered "seventy times seven" (see Matt. 18:22). Taken literally, that means 490 times—but Jesus wasn't proposing a mathematical solution. He was using the number seven to imply infinity. Stop counting how many times you have been offended and instead thank God for all the times He has overlooked your mistakes.

» **Am I nursing a grudge?** Today's culture of outrage tells us that anger is fashionable. Ranting is an actual genre of social expression. Our caustic political climate encourages people to get up mad in the morning, fuel their anger with hot political rhetoric throughout the day and then go to bed after listening to more arguments on cable news broadcasts. We are now literally poisoning ourselves.

Many Christians are mad that a pastor slighted them. They are jealous of someone who took a ministry position they wanted. They are angry because a Christian did something hypocritical—yet they refuse to admit that their bitterness is the ultimate hypocrisy!

Resentment is deadly. It actually can make you sick. Unforgiveness puts a frown on your face, wrinkles around your eyes and a sour tone in your voice. On the flip side, showing affection is healthy for you. Doctors have proven that a 20-second hug strengthens your immune system.

Don't let today's outrage culture infect you. Go against the flow of toxic hate. Make a decision today to work harder at relationships. Show some love. Forgive those who hurt you. Be diligent to preserve the unity of the Holy Spirit.

J. Lee Grady was editor of *Charisma* for 11 years and now serves as senior contributing editor. He directs the *Mordecai Project*, an international ministry that protects women and girls from gender-based violence. His latest books are *Follow Me* and *Let's Go Deeper* (Charisma House).