

Don't Be So Quick to End Relationships

Anger has reached the boiling point in our country. Flight attendants remove fist-fighting passengers from planes. Entitled customers go berserk in checkout lines. Restaurant patrons spew racist rants. We are not just irritated. We are outraged.

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

We have become a vicious culture. We no longer care how our words hurt people. Our love has turned to ice.

And we are naive if we don't recognize this cold-hearted hatefulness is affecting Christians. I've noticed that people today get offended more easily and are much quicker to storm out of a church when something goes wrong. No wonder we have a huge percentage of Christians who end up as church dropouts.

The world tells us that ending a relationship is as easy as hitting the "unfriend" button. But when I read the Bible, I don't see any room for outrage, resentment, intolerance or unfriending. Jesus gives us the supernatural power to love when we don't feel like it.

Have you been experiencing some hateful drama in your life? Have you considered ending a relationship? Did you already walk out of a church or break a close friendship because of hurt? If so, examine your heart and ask these probing questions:

Am I giving up too soon? The apostle Paul told the Ephesians

they should “always demonstrate gentleness and generous love toward one another, especially toward those who try your patience” (Eph. 4:2b, TPT). 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 a person’s face.

We often give up on relationships because we just don’t want to exert the energy to improve them. Relationships require a lot of work. When you unfriend someone just because they hurt you, you miss an opportunity to become more like Christ. Show some patience. Choose to love even when you don’t get anything in return.

Ephesians 4:3 (NLT) says we must “make every effort to keep [ourselves] united in the Spirit, binding [ourselves] together with peace.” The Greek word for “make every effort” means “to be diligent; to use speed; to be prompt or earnest; to labor.” That means you shouldn’t let wounds fester. Act quickly to repair the relationship before it gets worse!

Would Jesus close the door on 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 to one 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 doesn’t flippantly write people off. He loved us even when we were sinners, and He patiently drew us to Himself using “ropes of kindness and love” (Hos. 11:4b, NLT). Before you end a friendship, judge a pastor, storm out of a church or give someone the cold shoulder, remember how aggressively Jesus pursued a relationship with you. Let His 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” (Matt.

18:22b). Taken literally, that means 490 times—but Jesus didn't put a limit on forgiveness. He used 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 divisive political climate encourages people to get up angry in the morning, fuel their furor with hot political rhetoric throughout the day and then to go to bed after listening to more arguments on news broadcasts. We are poisoning ourselves.

Many Christians have allowed similar poison in their lives because of church drama. They rage because a pastor slighted them. They envy someone who took a position they wanted. They get angry because a Christian did something hypocritical.

Resentment is deadly. It puts a frown on your face and a sour tone in your voice. Don't let today's culture of outrage infect you. Go against the flow of toxic hate. Make a decision today to work harder at relationships. Forgive those who hurt you. Be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit.

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