

5 Toxic Attitudes You Must Allow God to Change

I was filled with the Holy Spirit 40 years ago this summer, so I wish I could say I have “arrived” at some level of Christian perfection. But the truth is that God is still working on me, sometimes with a shovel and a pickax, and other times with a bulldozer and dynamite. I have learned that the Holy Spirit, our great refiner, never stops stepping on my toes, confronting my sin and exposing my stinking attitudes.

He does this not to shame me or torture me, but to conform me to the image of Jesus. This grueling process is what the Bible calls “sanctification”—a big, theological word that simply means God is serious about burning the junk out of my heart so I can reflect His divine nature. He doesn’t mind putting me through the fire because He knows the happy outcome. Sanctification can be painful, but the result is, according to the author of Hebrews, the “peaceful fruit of righteousness” (Heb. 12:11).

When we invite Jesus into our hearts, He moves in—and He does not timidly co-exist with our sin. He is a ruthless warrior, and He goes on a loving rampage until every area of our rebellious hearts have been conquered. He slays our pride, kills our greed and shows no mercy to any sinful behavior that has controlled us. Your choice is to cooperate with this process, or to drag it out longer than necessary because you don’t want Him to meddle with your private life.

Below are five attitudes God wants to change in all of us. Bad attitudes can keep us out of our promised land. They can hinder God’s work in our lives. They can quench the Holy Spirit. If you have not yielded these attitudes to Him, let the Holy Spirit move in and begin the process of demolition.

1. Stubbornness – Some Christians approach God with hands joyfully upraised; others keep their arms defiantly crossed. Is your daily prayer: “Not my will, but Yours be done”? Or do you place strict conditions on your obedience? God wants surrender. Don’t be a stubborn foot-dragger or a Jonah who runs when God calls you. Some believers I know started out with a carefree heart of surrender, but they grew cautious and doubtful when things didn’t work out the way they expected. Quit sulking. Get back in the game, take off your parking brake and move forward with Him.

2. Negativity – Joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, but you would never know this when you are around certain Christians. They never learned to rejoice in the hard times. They never see the silver lining around any cloud. They always expect the worst. Their faith is extinguished by fear and doubt. Jesus died on the cross so we could experience unspeakable joy. If you have carried around a heavy blanket of sadness all your life, let God exchange it for a garment of praise.

3. Self-centeredness – The essence of sin is selfishness, but this attitude should not characterize Spirit-filled Christians. When we are baptized, we become a part of the church and we learn to love each other, serve each other and esteem each other higher than ourselves. We no longer have permission to be isolated loners. The Holy Spirit teaches us to say: “It’s not about me.” Quit viewing life through your own needs. Learn to put others first.

4. Woundedness – We’ve all been hurt. But real success in life is determined not by our circumstances but by how we face them. God calls us to forgive, no matter how much pain we endured when we were betrayed, disrespected, violated or overlooked. God wants to wipe away your tears, but He can’t heal you if you hate the people who hurt you. Forgiveness is a choice, not a feeling. Don’t wait until you have a warm, fuzzy feeling for your enemy. Make the decision to love anyway, and the feelings will come later.

5. Fault-finding – Philippians 2:14 commands us: “Do all things without murmuring and disputing” (MEV). But since the church began 2,000 years ago, there have been finger-pointers and whiners who have slowed the progress of the gospel with their petty complaints. There are 686,000 species of insects in the world, and billions of them are buzzing at the same time; in the same way there will always be critics buzzing with their latest accusations and opinions. Yet the world is not changed by insects but by people who have been transformed by Christ. Don’t join the tragic chorus of small-minded critics. Be an encourager instead.

God wants holiness. But some of us don’t realize that we can’t have true holiness until we surrender attitudes that are contrary to His nature. It’s not enough just to let go of sinful behaviors. He wants you to be like Jesus inside and out. He wants truth in the inner parts. Let Him take a sledgehammer to your bad attitudes.{eoa}