

Don't Be So Quick to End Relationships

Anger has reached the boiling point in our country. Passengers are being removed from planes because they started fistfights. Entitled store customers are going berserk in checkout lines. Restaurant patrons are spewing racist rants—and they don't even care if someone records their vile words on camera for the world to hear.

We are not just irritated. We are outraged. It has become fashionable to lace our conversations and social media posts with profanity. Whether it's 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 don't care how our words hurt people anymore. We have become a vicious culture. Our love has turned to ice.

And we are naïve if we don't recognize this dangerous level of 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 are 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 calls us to love—and He gives us the supernatural power to do 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 first:

1. Am I giving up too soon? The apostle Paul told the Ephesians that they should “always demonstrate gentleness and generous love toward one another, especially toward those who try your patience” (Eph. 4:2, Passion Translation). 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.

The truth is that 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 are missing 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 says we must “make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace” (New Living Translation). 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!

2. Would Jesus end this relationship? When you end a friendship because of an offence, you are doing the exact opposite of what Jesus did for you. Ephesians 4:32 says: “Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you” (NASB). 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” (Hosea 11:4, NLT). Before you end a friendship, judge a pastor, storm out of a church or

give someone a cold shoulder, 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 Matthew 18:22). Taken literally, that means 490 times—but Jesus wasn’t putting a limit on forgiveness. 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.

3. Am I nursing a grudge? Today’s culture of outrage tells us that it’s fashionable to be angry. Our divisive political climate encourages people to get up mad in the morning, fuel their anger with hot political rhetoric throughout the day and then to go to bed after listening to more arguments on news broadcasts. We are literally poisoning ourselves.

Many Christians have allowed similar poison in their lives because of church drama. They are mad that a pastor slighted them. They are jealous of someone who took a 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 makes people sick. It also makes us ugly and unpleasant. 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 culture of outrage 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 Spirit.