

Don't Let Your Love Grow Cold in These Hateful Times

The year 2020 will go down in history as the year of national outrage. While a virus is spreading across the United States, peaceful protests for racial justice morphed into vandalism, arson and anarchy. Angry marchers in Seattle took over several city blocks while protesters in Portland tried to burn down a federal courthouse. I've never known my country to be so hateful.

Anger has reached a boiling point. Passengers are being removed from planes because they started fistfights over leg room. Store customers are going ballistic because other customers aren't wearing masks. Entitled Americans, always ready to record a cellphone video, are ready to blow the whistle on each other.

We don't care how our words hurt people anymore. We have become a vicious culture. Jesus warned this would happen when He said that in the last days, "Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold" (Matt. 24:12, NASB).

We are naïve if we don't recognize this cold-hearted hatefulness 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.

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 considered ending a relationship recently because of politics? Did you already walk out of a church or break a

close friendship because of a disagreement? If so, examine your heart and ask these probing questions first:

1. **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.

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 (NLT) says we must “make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves 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!

2. **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 says “be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven 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). 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 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. 18:22b). 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? 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 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.

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.

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 maintaining your relationships. Forgive those who hurt you so your love doesn’t grow cold. {eoa}