

Today we'll learn the key to gaining control over the bitterness that leads to angry, abusive speech.

1. Put away bitterness that leads to abusive language – “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice:” (31).
  - a. Bitterness:
    - i. Derived from the description of something that had a bitter taste (Marah; Exodus 15:23).
    - ii. A bitter heart is one that bears deep resentment about the past (anger with a history).
    - iii. Bitterness is the root that ultimately leads to abusive language.
    - iv. Hebrews 12:14-16 “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail o the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.”
  - b. Wrath and anger:
    - i. The word for “wrath” means “rage.”
    - ii. This form of anger is uncontrolled.
    - iii. Proverbs 16:32 “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.”
    - iv. Proverbs 27:4 “Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous...”
    - v. Proverbs 29:8 “Scornful men bring a city into a snare: but wise men turn away wrath.”
  - c. Clamour:
    - i. The word for clamor could also be translated, “yelling,” “shouting,” or “screaming.”
    - ii. It refers to the way people speak when they are quarrelling with one another.
    - iii. Proverbs 15:1 “A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.”
  - d. Evil Speaking:
    - i. This word comes from the Greek word meaning “any kind of speech that is defamatory or abusive.”
    - ii. Abusive speech is a heart issue.
    - iii. Matthew 15:19 “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:”
    - iv. Luke 6:45 “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth for that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.”
  - e. Malice:
    - i. Malicious words are words that are meant to due harm.
    - ii. Malicious wards are meant to tear down rather than build up.
    - iii. Ephesians 4:15-16 “but speaking the truth in love...unto the edifying of itself in love.”
  - f. Applications:
    - i. Angry, abusive speech is the fruit of a bitter heart.
    - ii. Trying to prune the outward fruit without dealing with the root is futile.
2. Cultivate a tender heart that leads to forgiveness – “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”
  - a. Be Kind.
    - i. This is to be an ongoing process with one another.
    - ii. God's kindness is what leads us to repentance – “the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance (Romans 2:4).
    - iii. We should be constantly striving to cultivate a kindness toward one another.
    - iv. Colossians 3:12-13 “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.”

- b. Be Tenderhearted.
  - i. Kindness flows from a tender heart.
  - ii. The word for tenderhearted literally means “healthy bowels” and came to refer to the innermost, compassionate part of us, or our heart.
  - iii. Tenderheartedness is that which flows from the inside out.
  - iv. Changing the heart is the key to putting off bitterness and abusive speech.
  - v. God is tenderhearted toward us – “To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God” (Luke 1:77-78).
  - vi. 1 Peter 1:8 Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:”
- c. Be Forgiving.
  - i. Forgiveness is to be a regular practice in the Christian life (See Matthew 18:21-22).
  - ii. Our redemption is grounded in God’s forgiveness – “even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”
  - iii. There is no greater example of forgiveness than this.
- d. Application:
  - i. When you struggle with forgiveness, remember all the sins that you’ve committed that God has forgiven!
    - 1. When you refuse to forgive, you don’t get to enjoy God’s forgiveness (Matthew 18:23-35).
    - 2. When you refuse to forgive, you grieve the Holy Spirit.
    - 3. When you refuse to forgive, you give place to the devil.
    - 4. When you refuse to forgive, you harm yourself spiritually, emotionally, and physically (Saul).
    - 5. When you refuse to forgive, you harm those around you (Hebrews 12:15).
    - 6. When you refuse to forgive, you lose the ability to control your anger and abusive speech.
  - ii. When you choose to cultivate a heart of kindness and forgiveness, you reverse the process.
    - 1. When you forgive, you get to enjoy God’s forgiveness, His love, His joy, His peace, His longsuffering, His gentleness, His goodness, His meekness, His self-control, etc.
    - 2. When you forgive, you find freedom from the bondage of those who have abused you.
    - 3. When you forgive, you break the cycle of abuse.
    - 4. When you forgive, you gain the ability to control your thoughts, attitudes, words, and actions.
    - 5. When you forgive, you become a testimony to God’s kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness.
  - iii. Some caveats:
    - 1. Rarely is forgiveness a onetime event. When this occurs it’s usually when you know that you will likely never again have contact with the one you’ve forgiven.
    - 2. Most often, forgiveness must be continual. This is especially true with close relationships such as family and church family because of your ongoing relationship with them. In fact, it is the close relationships that this passage is primarily addressing.

Conclusion:

1. Listen to your words. Often, biting sarcasm comes from a wounded heart. Observe your words and your language patterns. Do they reveal a wounded, bitter heart?
2. Observe the way you treat those closest to you. Do you treat others with kindness and compassion?
3. Who do you need to forgive?
4. If you are regularly venting your bitterness and anger on others, you probably have a root of bitterness in your heart that needs to be addressed.
5. Are you ready to forgive?
6. Are you ready to accept forgiveness as a continual process?