



SERMON NOTES

From In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley

HEALING OUR HURTS

KEY PASSAGE: Ephesians 4:30-32 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE: Psalm 19:14 | John 8:32; 13:35 | 1 John 2:9; 4:20-21

► SUMMARY

Everyone gets hurt at one point or another. It's just part of living in this fallen world.

People say hurtful words, either thoughtlessly or deliberately. They abuse others, embarrass them, treat them unfairly, and may even inflict physical harm. There's no way to avoid all possible hurts, but God wants us to respond to them in ways that honor Him, bring healing, and free us from anger, resentment, bitterness, and an unforgiving spirit.

► SERMON POINTS

When we don't deal with the hurts that come our way, they'll linger in our souls despite all attempts to deny or suppress them. In time they'll solidify in minds, dominate our emotions, and enslave us.

This is a load God doesn't want us to bear, and He's provided the solution in Ephesians 4:30-32.

"Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. All bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and slander must be removed from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."

Some hurts in life are minor and can be easily overlooked and quickly forgiven, but others are deeply wounding, and those who suffer from them usually have a hard time letting them go. Although they know what the Lord has said, the hurt may become a source of security and identity. The very idea of letting go seems more threatening to them than the danger to their souls

that results from clinging to past hurts.

Unforgiveness is a natural response to offenses, but believers are called to live in the power of the Spirit, not in the naturalness of fallen humanity. When we refuse to forgive as the Lord commands, the hurt becomes a spiritual cancer deep within us. On the surface, things may appear fine, but poison is seeping into our souls.

God's Solution

To handle lingering hurts properly, Scripture says to remove or put away sinful responses like bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, and malice. Instead of harboring these attitudes, we are to respond in the Spirit with kindness, compassion, and forgiveness.

This means we must stop feeding our minds with the wrong done to us. Even when we pray, we may be guilty of this if we remind the Lord of how much we've been hurt and how bad the person is who caused our pain.

Attitudes of anger, resentment, bitterness, and malice cannot be contained. They spill internal poison, which overflows even on the innocent. The only solution is to deal with them as God says. If we do this immediately, healing can come quickly, but if we delay, there's a progression downward.

The Progression

- We begin to nurture the hurt by replaying it in our minds and emotions.
- We may develop a degree of hatred toward the offender. It could be passively displayed by not wanting anything to do with that person, or aggressively with a desire to make the offender suffer.

- We can't praise or worship the Lord because we're miserable inside. Truths from God's Word can't sink into our minds and hearts, and we know something is wrong deep inside us.

The Cause of Our Responses

We usually blame our bad attitudes on the wrong done to us. But no one can cause us to have an unforgiving spirit. We alone are accountable for our reactions. Anger and malice come from our heart. When they spring up, we can either accept them or reject them. If we allow these negative emotions to encompass us, they'll gain control and overflow into every aspect of our lives.

Bitterness, resentment, anger, and malice do not fit our identity as children of God. Our lives are to be characterized by love. We can't claim to love God if we hate others. "The one who loves God must also love his brother and sister" (1 John 4:21).

This command doesn't only apply to those people who are lovable, but even to those who hurt or wrong us at times. Love for one another is supposed to characterize us as disciples of Christ (John 13:35). This isn't something we can do in our own strength but only by the power of the Holy Spirit within us. He's the one who enables us to lay aside negative emotions and forgive the one who hurt us so that healing can come. When we walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh, we're able to overlook offenses, remove sinful attitudes, and respond with kindness, compassion, and forgiveness.

The greatest motivator for forgiveness is Christ. On the cross He took all our sins upon Himself, suffered the punishment we deserved, and offers us full forgiveness. How can we hold anything against anyone else, knowing that our offenses against God are so much greater, yet He forgave us?

The Consequences of an Unforgiving Spirit

- **Damages Emotions.** Healing comes with forgiveness,

but when we hold onto our hurts, it steals joy and contentment and replaces them with bitterness, anger, and resentment. Good emotions are frozen, and we can't love or accept love from others or God.

- **Erodes Fellowship With the Lord.** You can't hold onto sinful attitudes and be right with God. Your prayers will feel useless, your love for Him grows cold, gratitude dries up, and your praise is empty. The only way to be set free is through the healing of forgiveness.
- **Erodes Human Relationships.** There's no way to hide internal bitterness, resentment, and hostility from family, friends, co-workers, and fellow believers. These attitudes poison all our relationships.
- **Harms Health.** The attitudes and emotions we carry affect us physically in a variety of ways. Sometimes we seek relief from doctors, but they can never fix the root of the problem.

Forgiveness

God commands us to forgive one another. This doesn't mean forgetting, denying, excusing, or tolerating mistreatment. It means putting aside the debt and no longer holding it against the offender. There's no guarantee that everything will be right in the relationship. We're not responsible for the other person's actions. Our responsibility is to obey God by forgiving.

If one who hurt us is not available or has died, we can still forgive by imagining that person sitting in a chair across from us as we offer forgiveness, or by writing a letter. If we'll let go of this burden, our healing will begin.

► RESPONSE

- Have you suffered a deep hurt that is still affecting you today? How have you dealt with it so far? How has rehearsing the wrong in your mind affected your pain?
- If you've adopted the sinful attitudes in Ephesians 4:31, how have they damaged your life and your relationships with others and with God?
- What stops you from forgiving? What steps can you take to begin the process?

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