

Beating Bitterness with Kindness

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Ephesians 4:31-5:2 *Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

The text is so rich, but we will focus on the phrase be kind to one another.

FIVE ASPECTS OF CHRISTIAN KINDNESS

1. The Extent of Christian Kindness
2. The depth of Christian Kindness
3. The pattern of Christian Kindness
4. The instrument of Christian Kindness
5. The source of Christian Kindness

1. The Extent – How much kindness should we show? Verse 31 helps us here. ALL BITTERNESS is to be replaced by ALL KINDNESS. When Paul says in Ephesians 4:26 that we should be angry but not sin, and then He says in verses 31-32, get rid of anger and be kind, I think what he means is this: All inward bitterness and malice must go. But when it comes to emotional indignation and the glory of God is diminished, then I must take the side of truth (in love) all day long.
2. The Depth – The point here is not that Christian kindness is an external change of manners; it is an internal change of heart. The idea behind “tenderhearted” is that our insides are easily touched. This is not something you can turn on like a faucet – it is a deep **inner character quality**.
3. The Pattern – Two patterns are given here. First is the forgiveness of God. Second is the love of Christ. (See 4:32 and 5:2).
 - A. Four Qualities of God’s Forgiveness
 1. Takes sin seriously and is not flippant toward sin.
 2. Reckons with a real settling of accounts and so should ours
 3. God’s forgiveness is costly and so is ours
 4. God’s forgiveness is real and ours should be real also.
 - B. Three Qualities of Christ’s love

1. The love of Christ for us is undeserved. We should not insist that people earn our love and forgiveness
2. The love of Christ for us is holy and ours should be holy.
3. The love of Christ for us was sacrificial and self-denying, and ours should be too.

4. The Instruments of Christian Kindness

In verse 31, literally we read “let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be taken away from you.” In order for bitterness to be TAKEN, someone else is at work here. God never intended for bitterness to be an optional part of the Christian life. How do we get it taken from us?

5. The Source of Christian Kindness

- A. We must believe the Gospel for ourselves. Verse 2 – Christ loved us and gave Himself for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”
- B. We must believe that God has forgiven all our sins. 4:32 – “Forgiving one another even as God in Christ sake has forgiven you.” In order to be kind, you must be forgiven.
- C. We must believe we are loved by God. Verse 1: “Be imitators of God, as loved children.”