

I've Been Hurt Now What?

by Shane Idleman

The sermon addresses the reality of church hurt and emphasizes the importance of forgiveness and spiritual disciplines in overcoming it.

Duration: 51:15

Scripture: Matthew 5:23

Topics: "Forgiveness", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation in the Christian life. It highlights the toxic effects of holding onto unforgiveness, hindering genuine worship, joy, and spiritual growth. The message challenges individuals to address conflicts, release bitterness, and walk in the Spirit of love and forgiveness to experience the abundant life Christ offers.

Transcript

There's a website that you can actually put a worship song on it and it just repeats it. So I just hit repeat and get on my face in the morning. It takes four, five, six times.

I'm telling you, you don't believe me. That's why I hate when people say that's just emotionalism. No, it's my heart getting ready to worship God.

And it's not emotionalism, it's worship. And I would encourage you to be here next Sunday at 8 a.m. Not 8.15, not 8.20, not 8.35, but get here early at 8 a.m. We're going to actually worship before the first service. The worship is going to flow right into the first service.

And the two things you're going to have to fight are comfort and tiredness. I'm telling you right now, they're going to come at you hard. I just want to stay comfortable and I'm tired, but get here.

There's nothing more important than this. And I realized it this morning. I was driving here early and I thought, why is it so hard to get here early for prayer, but the Starbucks line is around the corner and down the parking lot? That wasn't hard.

And there's times we have to fight the flesh. So next Sunday, 8 a.m. in the sanctuary, and we're also going to meet at 7.30 next door for prayer. And I know it's difficult, I know it's challenging, but you can really tell the spiritual health of a church by who attends the prayer meetings and the worship mornings.

That's the spiritual health of the church. We should have 60, not six people here. And I'm not doing that as to rebuke.

I'm just doing it to convict and challenge all of us, myself included, because it is much easier to stay at home and kind of relax and get here when I get here. But I'm telling you that God will break through when we discipline ourselves. And I thought of this.

This might help a little bit. When I talk about spiritual disciplines, I haven't even got to the announcements yet or the introduction, but I thought this was important. When I talk about spiritual disciplines like worship or prayer or fasting, what you're doing is you're like a farmer planting the seeds and tilling the soil and watering.

Now we can water, but back in Jesus' time, they couldn't even water very often. They had to count on the rain. And how foolish would it be for the farmer to want to go and produce all the corn stalks? It doesn't happen.

All the farmer does is prepare the soil. And it's God who brings the growth. It's God who brings the fruit.

That's what spiritual disciplines do. They prepare the soil so God can begin to work in your life. Without those spiritual disciplines, that's why we walk around, and I call it sometimes the walking dead.

It's not just a popular TV show, or is it still popular? I don't know. But it's something that can happen in the church. We're physically alive but spiritually dead.

So that's why those spiritual disciplines are so important. We have a hard time sometimes doing the things that are the most important and cultivate the most fruit. And you can tell if you need this if this topic is boring you or if you don't want to hear this.

Sometimes it's those times that we need to hear those things. If you have your Bibles, you can turn to Acts 15. The topic of the message is, or the title is, I've been hurt, now what? I've been hurt, now what? And not a show of hands, but I'm pretty sure all of us can raise our hand when it comes to this topic, right? I've been hurt by the church.

Now, actually, I run into people all the time. I don't go to church. I've been hurt by the church.

And they don't like what I say. Me too. All the time.

But, see, you never rate the church on men. You rate a relation with God on who Jesus is. If you follow, if your church attendance is based on being hurt or not, you will never show up.

And I truly believe that God has probably worked the deepest work in my life and the life of my wife in this topic because I found this out the hard way. When you plant a church, you can't just go to a different one when the hurt comes. Well, they offended me.

Well, I'm going to see them next week. Well, they hurt me. I'm going to see them next week.

And you can't just go. Because most of you can just do this, right? Just go to the next church. And I get offended.

I'll just go to the next church. And I actually had to stay put. And I had to work through difficult things and difficult conversations and confronting and loving.

And I hurt people, and they hurt me. And we came to find out, you know what, that's kind of how it's going to be. You'll never go to a place where you avoid the hurts.

And it's a shame that we do hurt people, but sheep bite. They have big teeth. Sheep bite each other.

And how do we handle that? I've been hurt, so now what? In Acts 15, actually, I don't have time to go through it at all, but there were some dissensions. There were disputes. And maybe I'll unpack that at a later time, but this message has got so much to it, I want to get right to it.

And then we look at Acts 15. We go all the way down to verse 37, and this happens in ministry. Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark, but Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.

Then contention became so sharp that they departed from one another. So see, it happened even in the early church. When you have Barnabas and Paul departing, that's a pretty big offense.

Now, we can read into this, and I don't want to do that, but I think they both had valid reasons. Paul had concerns. I don't want to take this person Mark with us who bailed out on the last trip, who hasn't been with us.

He's flaky, for lack of a better word in the Greek. I'm not taking this person with us. Barnabas is looking at forgiveness and saying, I want to take this person with us.

And I've learned that you have to have both wisdom and forgiveness because sometimes without wisdom we think we become a doormat, and we just allow the same things, and we actually enable people, and we allow them to continue in destructive patterns or in destructive behavior. And now we're supposed to forgive 70 times 7, right? It's not a number of 490. Okay, I've reached that.

I don't have to forgive anymore. Jesus is showing that we have to have a heart of forgiveness, but we also have to use wisdom. So somehow there was a division among them, but we know from Colossians 4.10 that Paul said, If Mark comes to you, welcome him.

In 2 Timothy 4.11, only Luke is with me. Paul is saying, Get Mark and bring him with you because he is helpful to me in my ministry. So the book of Acts is the early record of the church.

They had some problems with Mark, but now we see Mark being restored somehow in that relationship. So I'm just going to pull off of this and look at what the Scriptures teach and remind you of a couple of things. The first one is huge.

Unforgiveness is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die. I don't know. Let that sink in this week.

You're going to email me. What was that quote again? Well, it's easy to remember. Actually, unforgiveness is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die.

Now I'll jump ahead and just tell you up front. The reason this is so difficult is because the flesh, that Adamic nature, the nature of Adam that is in rebellion against God, loves division. It thrives off

unforgiveness and it flourishes off bitterness.

The flesh is just well-pleased by an unforgiving heart. So that's why it's hard because you have this unforgiveness in us that wants to not forgive you, but then you have the Spirit in you, and if you know you have the Holy Spirit in you, that can't coexist. And if you start and continue to suppress the work of the Spirit and carry that unforgiveness in your heart, you will quench and grieve the work of the Spirit.

It will hurt your walk with God. You won't want to worship. You won't want to come to prayer meetings.

You'll have a hard time praying at home as it is. You'll barely drag yourself to church, and you're going to hold on to that unforgiveness until the day you die. And that's pretty sad, isn't it? A Christian holding on to all that.

It's an oxymoron to be an unforgiving Christian. Seasoned men and women of God have been offended ten times over. I will encourage you in this area, if you know somebody who talked to them, they've been in church a long time, they've been a man or woman of God, they've been hurt many times over.

Sometimes we think of spiritual maturity, they've never been hurt. Actually, it's the opposite. They have the scars and they have the wounds, but they've still trusted in their Savior, and they've released this unforgiveness.

And I'll just give you the bad news up front, we're going to be offended for the rest of our lives. Maybe at this church service, maybe at the next one, maybe believers or on Facebook, or being offended. I started to make a list of all the silly things I've heard.

Somebody didn't say hi to me. I wasn't asked to be on the worship team. I wasn't asked to speak.

That person didn't acknowledge me. And we get all these self-focused things. Looking back, they were so silly to come in and hurt our relationship with others.

But that's how the enemy works. He takes these little offenses and begins to water them. Have you ever noticed that things just escalate? Or they get bigger than they should have been? At first, they're just little.

But then you start to pour water on it. That person didn't say hi to me. A couple days go by.

You know what? I think last week, water. And then you talk to somebody, and that other person doesn't help. They fuel it.

And then here's some more water for that little weed. And before you know it, you've got this full-blown problem. You're walking around mad, and the other person doesn't even know it.

Because that's how the enemy works. See, a root of bitterness, the Bible talks about. Do roots grow? They grow so big, they'll pop up concrete.

They'll pop up asphalt when that root grows. So my encouragement through the whole message is going to be pull that root out early. And it hurts sometimes to goad the person, but it's very healthy to say, what did you mean by that? Help me understand that.

And as you talk it through to believers, you're able to conquer that unforgiveness and that bitterness. Unforgiveness steals your joy. It hurts your relationship with others, and it damages your walk with God.

Have you ever come into a worship service and you want to worship, but you see that person? Oh, I hope the 11 a.m. is more lively. Come on, guys. You are off caffeine, aren't you? You're tired.

But haven't you come in and you're like, I mean, I haven't, but I'm sure some of you have, right? And it's that unforgiveness that's there. It's very hard to worship God. And I've seen churches split over things like this.

God never designed us to hop around and stay stagnant. That's what people do, is they'll go from one place, to one place, to one place, to one place. And I can tell you, nine times out of ten, I'll meet somebody sometimes, and guys, I'm really just trying to be transparent this morning to help, not to be condemning and hurt in the wrong way, but just to look at things.

And all the people come up, and they'll say, oh, we found your church a couple weeks ago, and we left the other one because of this. And if it's not a biblical reason, and they're still dealing with some hurt, they don't make it here very much longer. Because that's the MO.

I went to that church, and then I went to that church, and then I went to that church, and I went to that church. And they begin to go around, and they never mature. Now, there's reasons to leave the church.

I added these yesterday, and I'm going to get to them in just a minute. But in this area, I would encourage you to err on the side of grace, and grow and follow God's course of restoration. Because if you err on the side of bitterness and negativity, it never produces anything healthy.

And we get hurt a lot, and it's a matter of releasing that hurt. So let me just talk about that, because you're probably thinking, because I've had people, when I've given this message before, many years ago, they stay put at a church that maybe God is calling them away from, just because they talked about the hopping, you know, back and forth. But here's reasons to consider leaving a church.

Even this one. These are reasons to consider leaving a church. Scripture is being watered down, or avoided, or twisted.

And you know, that's just not right. Now we can agree on different things that are non-essential. How communion is done, or how sometimes on the gifts of the Spirit, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, church governing and how it's ran.

There's things that people, well, I don't really see it that way. Salvation, election, free will, total depravity, limited atonement, all these big theological terms. There's differences in there, and they can be healthy if the Spirit's right, but I'm talking about essentials.

When you see Scriptures watered down, or avoided, when the church tells you, I'm not going to talk about any of those controversial things, the blood of Christ, and repentance, and God's judgment, we'll never mention hell from this Paul, but we're a welcoming church. Well, be careful. Because that's not the whole counsel of God.

So when a church begins to decline in this area, you have permission, I believe, to run. Now, the reason I'm being careful is God sometimes, is He calling a person to stay and make a difference. This is many times what happens.

I remember I read a lot on the Reformation that happened, actually, I believe, early in 1200s, 1300s, 1400s, accumulated 1500s. People like Martin Luther, John Calvin, or different people would actually stay in the church. Thinking they could make a difference and change things.

But instead, some of them got their heads cut off or burned at the stake. And they realized that sometimes you can't stay there and make a difference. That God calls you to come out of that and be grounded elsewhere.

And it's actually not a hard problem because the more you seek God, the more you humble yourself, He will direct you in this area. I'm quite convinced of that. Also, another reason to leave is that sin is never confronted.

What I mean by that is I know churches. I mean, I can call a church and say, hey, this person is leaving our church because we confronted them about they can't continue to cheat on their spouse. And you actually have them on your worship team.

Well, brother, we believe in forgiveness and we're just going to let the Holy Spirit work. Well, really? Sin's not confronted. And there are churches, they won't confront anything.

They hope that a person stumbles on the Bible and reads a passage that they're not reading and comes to the truth on their own. So sin is just never confronted. It's just avoided.

We just avoid that. Many times the reason they avoid it is they want the numbers. They want the quantity but not the quality of the believer.

So if there's a church that all they're concerned about is numbers and not confronting. Because when you, here's what happens. Oh, just let the cat out of the bag.

Whatever that means. There's a cat stuck in a bag and you open the bag. The hard thing about confronting, the hard thing about confronting is nine out of ten times the people do leave.

That's the sad thing. And that's why it's hard. We go to them and say, hey, we don't think you have, for example, biblical grounds.

You're coming, you're worshiping, but you're leaving your spouse. There's no biblical grounds. Well, I just don't love him anymore.

I'm moving on. But as you confront them, they say, Papa, I'm never seeing you again. Because we're so used to wanting people to tell us what we want to hear.

And as soon as somebody challenges them about their lifestyle, about this, they're like, oh, I'm out of here. So that's the hard thing for the church is we know that when we confront, often the person leaves. And ironically, but really not ironically, biblically, the people who don't leave who say I need to work on that, I need to grow, in a year they're in leadership and serving in some ministry.

Because they stayed and they grew. So when a church tells you or when believers tell you something to help you, don't get offended and upset. Embrace it.

Now, initially you will get offended and upset, right? Like, oh, man. But God, are you working here? I mean, I just got a mean letter a few weeks ago. It says, I can't believe you said OMG from the pulpit.

You're blaspheming and you're like, did I do that? Oh my God. I'm talking about, oh my God, help us. We need your help, America.

Oh my God, this is unbelievable. I see oh my God throughout the scripture. But I had to look like, okay, I hope I'm not coming across this flippantly use of God's.

So that was at first, I was like, oh, but maybe there's a point there. And you want to look at criticism, constructive criticism. Now that doesn't give you permission to email me all kinds of stuff, right? Why aren't you wearing a suit and tie? Why are you talking for an hour? Why are you, you know, just be nice.

Give me a break here for a while. We call it time release criticism. Just wait till it's a good service and come up and say things.

But that's how it works sometimes. But look at what, if somebody loves you, I'm not talking about the person who constantly belittles and is constantly critiquing, but if somebody loves you enough to care, cares about you, you should embrace that. Another reason to leave is if the church lacks spiritual life.

If a person says, I'm dying spiritually. If the worship is dead, the preaching puts you to sleep, you just don't sense the spirit of God there. And you're hungry.

I've had, me and my wife, when we first got married, we've left a few churches over this and we prayed, Lord, I don't know what's wrong. And we start blaming ourselves. Lord, what's wrong with me? What's wrong with me? Lord, I don't feel that hunger, that passion.

Little did I know he's stirring that holy discontent to plant a church. I didn't know that. But we were like, I can't, I'm just, where's the spiritual life? Where's the, just the fervor and the excitement and the passion? I mean, my goodness.

Right? We're talking about, this can take time, right? It's not a clean process. We're talking about, we're talking about important things. We're talking about important things here.

Man, you guys are looking for opportunities now. I should've never thrown that out there. But the church lacks spiritual life.

And I wanna be careful on this point, too, because I know, actually, a few of you, we've talked about this before. We kind of, it's ironic when people say, well, I'm just not being fed. Now, a lot of times, you gotta feed yourself.

You gotta look within. Are you not being fed because you're not convicted, you're not in the words, you're not in the worship, you're not in the prayer team, or prayer area, and people, I'm just not being fed, but they don't wanna get plugged into anybody, anywhere. Like, well, I'm just not being fed, I can't meet people right.

Because you come in after the service starts and you leave before it ends. And you're just, you're never, so there has to be an effort there. To be fed, you have to pick up the fork and put it in the mouth, too, and be fed.

But, I often see the other side of that, where I was dying spiritually, my wife was. We didn't wanna go to church because it was just an hour of reading and here's what, and the worship team's just, you know, just kind of getting like, where's that life? Where's the passion? That's what I want. And we were not being fed

spiritually.

We were dying spiritually. I could get more on watching the internet and putting on Hillsong and worshiping. And so that can be valid from time to time.

If you want that, you know, and people say, well, if a church steals people from other churches, you don't steal people, the grass is never greener, but wherever you nourish that grass and you give that grass water, it gets greener and sometimes people wanna go to that green pasture, not the dying grass. So these are all areas you just take back and you filter through your prayer life. Because if a church is dying spiritually, you're not being fed, you're not growing, I think there's biblical reasons to look elsewhere if God is leading you in that direction.

Because it should be, we should go and we should grow. The church is very controlling. Have you heard that before? The church is very controlling.

Fortunately, I have not heard that about this church much at all over the years. But I want to explain this for a minute. Controlling.

Now, at the heart of the word, it's a good thing. Controlling means to direct the course of events. So when they say the church is controlling, sometimes I'm like, well, what do you mean? Because we have to control certain things.

We have to control the flow of service. We have to control the sin valve. Don't just allow, and that's when people are challenged often.

When they're challenged on their behavior, they say, you're controlling. You're very controlling, I'm leaving. That's not controlling, that's confronting.

You're confusing the two. And so to a certain degree, the church does have to control the structure that we are within. But now, when does it turn to being unhealthy? Here's when it turns into being unhealthy, in relationships or the church.

If the church or people manipulate you with God's Word. Have you ever been manipulated with God's Word? I'm not talking about encouraged. Manipulated.

Well, you know, I've seen abusive husbands quote Scriptures to their wives. You need to stay here and submit to me. Look at this.

Look at this. Oh, sir. Back up a few verses.

I can give you ten dealing with your anger and your attitude and the way you treat her. That's manipulating. And that's controlling in a wrong way.

And when churches, see here, it says this. And they have this arrogance about them. There's a difference between pointing and being arrogant and trying to control and saying, listen, I love you enough to show you what Scripture says.

It says, don't forsake your first love. Come back to that. See, it's not controlling you, it's encouraging you to look to the Word.

Also, many times, it's easy to see when a person who's very controlling doesn't get their way, then there's temper tantrums and throwing fits. It looks fine on a four-year-old, but at 40, it's embarrassing. Right? My four-year-old, little temper tantrums.

Doesn't get her way. But when a controlling person, when you begin to resist that, and here comes the temper, and here comes the, other word, threats, well, this and that, you're in a controlling environment. Churches do this.

Controlling church, they are never satisfied and they don't appreciate what you're doing. They always put you down and they challenge even your motives. And they begin to impose their will on you.

So it's a very unhealthy controlling environment. But a church, just to let you know right now, the next time if you ever say, well, the church is controlling, well, the church has to be controlling. Because without controlling certain things, the opposite of controlling is chaos.

So we control the times of worship and the prayer times. If we see people that are caught in sin, and we go and we want to just lovingly encourage them, and I hear it a lot, well, you're just controlling. All that really is is a deflection.

See, you just convicted me. I'm deflecting that conviction back on you. Now I'm not responsible.

Because you're controlling. So that was just a little extra I decided to throw in. And those are reasons to leave a church.

Scripture's watered down. Sin is never confronted. The church is lacking spiritual life.

Granted, God might want you to stay there and bring that spiritual life, but many times people need to leave because the church is already so ingrained in spiritual death that they are dying spiritually. So not a good reason. They didn't choose me for something.

Or the pastor said something I didn't like. Or somebody said something I didn't like. I didn't get my way.

Somebody was rude to me. You see, all these are focused on personal offenses. That's why Jesus said turn the other cheek.

He's dealing with personal offenses. This hurt me personally. And we're called to turn those things around and turn the other cheek.

Did you know that Jesus was offended? Oh, here's a good reminder. Herod tried to kill Him. His family rejected Him.

Entire cities denounced Him. John the Baptist questioned Him. The Pharisees mocked Him.

The Sadducees challenged Him. The scribes accused Him. His people cried, crucify Him.

Pilate sentenced Him. Judas betrayed Him. Peter denied Him.

And His disciples forsook Him. And the world is still offending Him today. That's why they say there's power in forgiveness.

He would have forgiven all these groups I just mentioned had they turned to Him. Here's a scripture to really ponder. Matthew 6.15 But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive you your sins.

Now there's two things we can do. We can just gloss over that and skip ahead. And every time I read that, I pause for a minute because if that's saying what it's saying, but if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

The challenge is this. When we believe, and we repent, and God comes in, changes our lives, we're forgiven. So if we hold on to unforgiveness, how can He not forgive us when He already has forgiven us? And our salvation isn't contingent upon me forgiving others or any type of sin.

It's contingent upon belief and repenting. So what's He talking about here? Well, I did some research for you, so you don't have to. Two schools of thought.

The first school of thought, theologians say this. When we don't forgive, our blessings are removed. Something is being held against us by God.

He's saying, okay, you're not going to forgive. Blessings are withheld. The things I have for you, the blessings or the abundance or the relationship I want to have with you is going to be hindered, and I'm holding that from you.

I'm holding that from you because you're not forgiving others. The second point of this, or the second thought in theological circles, and it's probably the one that I would agree with. Now with that said, I do agree with what I just told you.

I believe that if a Christian holds in unforgiveness and they're just holding it in and they're not going to let it go, that it does hinder your walk with God. Without a question. I've never seen people worship God and tears coming down their face and getting from the Word of God, not being in a hurry, who are bitter and angry and critical and holding in unforgiveness.

I've never seen that. The people who are worshipping that way are worshipping because they're free. They've been set free.

So it does hurt your walk. But I think the Scripture is pertaining to this. D.A. Carson said this, There is no forgiveness for the one who does not forgive.

How could it be otherwise? His unforgiving spirit bears strong witness to the fact that he has never repented. Often we look at the fruit of a person. So if somebody's professing to be a believer, but they're holding in unforgiveness, they're never forgiving anybody, it's a mark of who they are, you have to question their salvation.

Are they really saved? Because a person who's really saved, I don't know about you, but it's hard to hold in unforgiveness. I mean, I have to fight. I have to say, nope, God, I'm not doing it this week.

I am not doing it this week. I've had enough of them. And day by day and week by week, alright, it comes out.

Forgive and move forward and forgive. So it's hard to keep that in. And the reason is if you look at forgiveness in the Greek language when it was used here, it means God will not pardon or release you.

So those terms, to me, have to do with pardon and release in regard to salvation. Now, many of you are probably thinking this. Well, let me give you the bottom line.

You don't want to find out what the Scripture means. You don't want to find out the hard way. It means that if you're holding in unforgiveness and you're an unforgiving person, does God really have your heart? Have you truly repented of your sin? Because if I look back and say, look at everything that God has forgiven me of, and I'm going to sit here and hold the grudge? Are you kidding me? This is exactly the story of that man who was forgiven so much, and he had a debt he could never pay.

The king forgave him, and he went out and he caught this little servant and was strangling him, going, give me that \$20 you owe me. Give it to me. And he kicked him while he was down and everything.

Give me that. And the king found out, and the king put him in prison. That's the same thing with us.

Of all the sin that we've ever created, God said it's done. And the offenses are against Him. A Christian can't hold unforgiveness in their heart.

And I know people get mad, but Shane, you don't know what my father did to me. Or my uncle. You don't know.

And I don't know. And I'm not minimizing the pain. But I am saying that you have to release that for your own spiritual health.

Now here's where many of you are caught maybe. There is a difference between a lifestyle and a struggle. I believe that this person, it's a lifestyle of unforgiveness.

He's not a forgiving person. It's a lifestyle, therefore his heart's not been changed. But many of you, many of you that will hear this later, are struggling in this area.

And a struggle is different from a lifestyle because a struggle, the person's struggling amidst their struggling. They usually say things like, I know I need to forgive, but I just can't. I know I need to, Shane.

I know I need to let this go, but I can't. And there's a struggle there. That's not a bad spot to be because God can work with that.

But I would encourage you to let that go this morning. There's a good book out there, it's called The Bait of Satan. John Bevere, he said this, many go from church to church or ministry to ministry.

They leave and they blame the leadership. They are blind to any of their own character flaws. They do not realize that God wanted to refine and mature them.

The best way, and this is what we don't like, the best way you grow spiritually is to go through the furnace of affliction. Uh-oh, did you hear that? Not the flower bed of roses. The furnace of affliction.

I mean, that's how I can stand up here before you today is God humbled and humbled and humbled and still humbles me. Offenses, rude comments, people gossiping about me, about my family, all these things, and taking those offenses and saying, I release and I forgive and God move us forward. And from that comes spiritual strength, fortitude, perseverance, because you grow.

But if you always run, here's what happens. When you run and you don't deal with these things, you become a little child spiritually. Grab out the binky and get out the hot milk.

Right? Go, go, come on. It's okay. It's okay, you've been hurt.

What happened? They didn't ask you to help? Oh my goodness. They don't know what they have. This little treasure in you, right? And then, and yeah.

And we just never grow. They never grow. And that's why I just have a passion for this because I see, I saw future elders and future deacons and future worship leaders and future, five, six, seven years ago, I saw there's a potential right there, but they're still walking around with the binky in their mouth.

Seven years later, ten years later, they're still holding that in. And you know, right? When you run into them, you can tell the spirit of forgiveness is not in them. The spirit of Antichrist is in those eyes because they're holding these things in.

When we have fellowship with God, we should be right with man. That's the bottom line. The enemy loves to divide the church and he will love to divide your family with offenses.

That's how he works. That's how he brings division and brings in offenses. And it's amazing how many times you'll hear something the way the person didn't mean it.

And the reason you hear it that way is because the enemy becomes, ends and plants the seeds. Did you hear what they said? Really? That's not at the heart of the person. That's why we've learned a long time ago, not perfected this area, but we will often go, now, I'm a little confused.

I took it this way, and I'm hearing, what did you mean by that? And you talk it through instead of holding that little root of bitterness that becomes a big stubborn tree. And you've got to call a tree cutting company to cut it down by the time it gets to that level. And it's not healthy.

So the enemy, that's how he plants seeds. And he'll plant seeds of doubt. He'll mistrust all these things.

And it was funny, Pentecost. We read about Pentecost in the book of Acts. And I'll never get over that statement.

I always think of it. They were all with one accord. They were all with one accord.

What about if this worship team wasn't following a sheet of paper or anything, and they just did whatever they wanted? Do you want me to show you what it sounded like? Not good. With one accord. That's what God wants.

With one accord. That beautiful worship. That harmony with.

I've been offended, I've been hurt, but I'm singing in harmony with you. And the church was with one accord, and the Spirit of God fell upon them. I wonder how many people have not been truly filled with the Spirit of God because they're holding in all that bitterness and resentment and unforgiveness.

Because if that's your heart, the Holy Spirit won't fill you. You actually quench and grieve the Spirit. And it's sad because I see that in churches.

I see that in people. They've been Christians many years. They're still holding in all that unforgiveness.

Unforgiveness, it's terrible. I've been going back and forth all morning if I should even say this. I'm going to be careful, but I think it's important.

One of the hardest things was when we actually moved up here. And for many people in this community, I was like Satan. Like, who is that guy coming into this church? I've never seen anything so alarming and pathetic than what I saw.

Supposed to be Spirit-filled Christians and treating us a certain way. It was unbelievable. There's people still now in this community who won't look at me, who won't talk to me.

I'll come in somewhere and they'll get up and they'll leave. And I'm like, Lord, how is this even possible in your church? I can understand being upset or preference or didn't work out like we thought or different things. I can deal with that weekly.

Things don't work out like I thought they would often. But what I can't deal with is holding onto unforgiveness. And what hurts me most is I'm set free.

They're the ones in bondage. I want them back to the poison. I want them to stop drinking the poison.

They're so mad and bitter and it's hurting them, not me. Here's the wonderful thing about forgiveness. I was going to get to it at the end, but when Paul said in Romans, I believe it is, as much as it depends upon you, live at peace with all men.

So when you have a forgiving heart, you release it. If they have it, you're still good. You're good.

You're filled with the Spirit. They could hate you. They could want you to die.

And it doesn't matter. You're released. You're set free.

You're worshiping God. It's their problem now. See, many of us, we get upset because I want this relationship restored.

I've done all that I can do. And we stay here broken and hurt because of the other person. God says don't fix them.

You have been set free going forward. But we stay bound to that old relationship because the person is controlling us through their unforgiveness. And it's biblical to release that and to let it go, hey, I've done everything I can do.

Back to that other incident when the church came up here. To say I've done everything I can do is an understatement. I wanted to reach out.

I wanted to get lunch. Let's talk this through. Let's pray.

Let's repent together. Let's move forward. Nothing.

So I said, well, I've done all that I can do. I have no regret whatsoever. Now it all lays on them.

And that's what hurts is I know how it's hurting them spiritually. You can't do those things and be happy spiritually. You can't be loving the word of God and loving worship and loving your new church.

You can't be because you're still holding in that toxic emotion that will kill people. It's funny. I mean, I love to read health books too.

And they're coming out with studies. American Heart Association has concluded that anger will lead to an early heart attack. I could have told you just look at the Bible.

Psychologists, in psychology books, secular psychology books, the number one problem we are confronted with today is unforgiveness. It's all here. That's why people are going on medication.

That's why not... See, it's toxic. We forget that these emotions are toxic. They will hurt the body.

The reason is anger produces and messes with your neurotransmitters and sends adrenaline, endorphins, all these things that can be good if you're running from a lion, right? But bad if you're just trying to get through day every day and all these toxins are released into the bloodstream and it's hurting us because we're not meant to carry these things. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger be put far away from you. I love reading that but I hate applying it.

And that's what the Bible talks about. The Holy Spirit is not a spirit of division, animosity, anger, or bitterness. So you have to wonder if you're a spirit-filled believer, and I clarify that, right? Because if you're filled with the Spirit of God, it's impossible to be divided with another person because the Holy Spirit isn't divided.

But you might say, but wait a minute, there's a relationship that's fractured and you have any of those? I've got a few. But see, when you've done all you can do through the Spirit of God in you, you've released it, you've said, hey, I forgive you guys and let's talk this through in the future if you ever want to talk. You're released.

You've done all you can do. So the Holy Spirit in you is fine. He wants that relationship back, but it takes two.

Here's a couple of things that will help, and I'm going to get right to some Scriptures and have you out of here. The Holy Spirit is not a spirit of division. We said that.

But we take things way too personally. And we think the worst instead of the best. This has really helped me over the years, and my wife too.

We don't take things too personally. I mean, there's not a week that goes by. I mean, we get the church, we hear from a lot of good things, but there's not a week that goes by that somebody, oh, you're the guy that's pounding the pulpit and confronting sin.

Wow, I'm not sure if we're ready for your church yet. Don't take that too personally, because I know God is working in their hearts. People go, oh, I go to that church.

Isn't that the church that's legalistic or the moralism? Don't take it too personally. Or when people say things about you, don't take it too personally, because the enemy wants to take that in. Wants you to take that in and dwell on that.

And don't think the worst. Think the best of people. Actually, the Bible defines love as that love is patient, love is kind, it doesn't envy, it doesn't boast, it's not rude, it's not proud, it's not self-seeking.

How you doing so far? It doesn't keep a record of wrong done against it. It always hopes, it always perseveres, it always trusts. That's what real love is.

But we think love is googly eyes. Right? Love this person because the lust is there. That's not love.

Actually, true love, biblical love, is loving someone despite how you feel. So the next time a spouse says, I'm divorcing because I just don't love you anymore, then what kind of love did you have in the first place? Because true love loves... well, we won't get into that. How God first loved us and His love for us.

And here's what happens. We develop a critical spirit by default. You've heard me often, what I say by default is, if you do nothing to foster forgiveness and releasing offenses, if you do nothing, by default, your flesh will cause you to develop a critical spirit.

That's why many people in the church are critical. They are. They're critical.

I don't mean here, I just mean in general, we have a critical spirit because we've never dealt with offenses to the degree we need to. We're not striving. Here's what forgiveness and all these things look like.

In your prayer time, Lord, remove this hard heart from me. Lord, I want to forgive this person. Help me from the wrong they've done against me.

And you take it to God. You humble yourself. That's how you clean the trash out of your heart is you take it to God and let Him work in this area.

So a couple scriptures. 2 Corinthians 5.19 God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. Are you ready for this? If you ever wondered if you want to be in ministry, you're already in ministry.

I spoke about that a few weeks ago. But He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. You, you, you, you, you, you, you and me.

We have the ministry of reconciliation. We are actually bridge builders. We are supposed to reconcile.

God has been reconciling the world since the fall of creation through Christ, bringing redemption, reconciliation. So you have the ministry of reconciliation. I just gave you a ministry.

Well, you don't seem too happy about that ministry, do you? Because that's the hard one, right? I'd rather take a homeless person a sandwich than have the ministry of reconciliation sometimes. Because that means getting involved. That means having the hard talks.

You know those talks? That's why things, I think, stay undealt with many times is because we don't have those talks. We just, let me just, let this blow over. And it doesn't blow over, it blows back.

And God wants us often to have those hard talks and go to people and say, hey, I feel offended in this area, I feel hurt. And then nine times out of ten, things are better. Some of the strongest relationships I have were like this sometimes.

And then we've worked through those things and it comes back stronger. So you have the ministry of reconciliation. Is there family members or friends right now that you know aren't reconciled? You have the ministry of reconciliation.

I'll tell people, why don't you text that person and reach out to them or let them know, don't text reconciliation, but text to call them. Can I call at a good time? Can we talk? And I'll often tell family members, talk with that other one. And friends, talk.

The ministry of reconciliation. Now, at the core I believe that the ministry of reconciliation means helping man be reconciled to God. The ministry of reconciliation.

Reconciliation. Pointing them to the Savior they need. Galatians 5.14 And it goes on.

I don't know how much I'll get to, but I want to read this. For all of the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. So, many of us who are so worried about the law and rules and regulations, it boils down to this.

Love your neighbor as yourself. But if you bite and devour one another, beware, you will be consumed by one another. If you bite and devour.

I say then, wait, let me stop for a minute. Somebody has to stop biting and devouring. Somebody in the house.

Somebody in the church. We have to stop biting. Who's going to be the person who stops biting? The reason we don't want to often is because nope, they're wrong.

They need to come to me. It's called pride, right? So stop biting and devouring. Walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

How do you walk in the Spirit? You forgive. You forgive and you release these things and you move on. You're filled with the Spirit.

So as I'm walking in the Spirit, I'm releasing. I'm not going to let that get to me. I'm not going to let that bother me.

And forgiving and releasing, you're walking in the Spirit. And he goes and he lists tons of things from outbursts of wrath, selfish ambition, hatred, contentions. Oh, contentions.

All these things that aren't biblical. He says, those who practice such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God. So people go, oh my goodness, how is that possible? I deal with that.

Well, the meaning, or actually to understand this better, comes right from looking at the word practice. Those who do not practice these things. In other words, is it a lifestyle? The reason Paul says this is he wants people to say, wait a minute, I do practice these things.

I do practice these things. I'm angry. I'm jealous.

I've got fits of rage. I have an unforgiving heart. I do practice these things.

You will not inherit the Kingdom of God because that's simply revealing that your heart has never been converting. See, fruit of conversion. There's fruit of conversion.

The fruit of conversion is a loving, forgiving heart. Doesn't mean you don't struggle with that, but it's there. See, you can't get away from this point.

There's always fruit with conversion. I don't agree with the people who say, well, fruit will come later. Fruit will come later.

I know what they're saying is people change and they grow and fruit is coming later. But initially, when the heart is changed, things change. I've talked to people, they were a mean monster one day.

The next day, they have this love they can't understand. They want to read the Bible. Where'd that come from? The fruit.

The heart is right. So here's the final thought on this scripture, Matthew 5, 23, 24. Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go your way.

First, be reconciled to your brother and then come and offer your gift. The bottom line is that holding in offenses prevents genuine worship. You can't worship God if you're holding in offenses.

Joy, peace, and contentment are all tied to forgiveness. It's a miserable Christian, miserable Christian who's wasted their entire life holding in unforgiveness and bitterness and resentment. So my challenge to you is, I'm gonna have the worship team come up in just a minute, if there are issues in your heart, if there are things within your heart that you have been holding, unforgiveness, bitterness, you know, right, you know, because it's convicting.

It's like, oh man, that hurt. I just ask, we can't apply this right now, you can't go run home and reconcile, unless it's your spouse sitting next to you. Maybe some of you can do that right now.

But as we're worshiping, begin to reconcile those things in your heart. Things that I've explained from other churches or past offenses or things. Begin to reconcile those and say, Lord, I'm gonna fix that when I get out of here.

I'm gonna write the email. I'm gonna write the letter. And the only reason I say this is because I want you to experience the abundant life that Jesus Christ spoke of.

And unforgiveness does not do that. It holds you down. And that's why maybe the Bible is boring.

That's why you don't come to church consistently. Maybe that's why worship seems dead. It's like going to the prayer room, I'd rather go get a root canal.

Because there's something wrong with the heart.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/rszR3EwaRVY.mp4>

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