

An Unforgiving Spirit

Objective

To understand the consequences of an unforgiving spirit and how to deal with it.

References

www.insight.org – Dr. Charles Stanley

Scriptural Verses

“And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.” Ephesians 4:32

Lesson Guidelines

The most devastating thing you can do to yourself is to resent others. The longer you do not forgive the worse it gets, leading to health problems and devastating consequences to your spiritual life.

Forgiveness is to give up the resentment against someone and the right to get even, no matter what they have done (Ephesians 4:30-32). An unforgiving spirit is a deliberate decision to refuse to give up this resentment and the right to get even.

Attributes of an unforgiving spirit

- It is a refusal to extend to others what God has extended to us.
- It plants a root of bitterness in the heart.
- It has a devastating, destructive effect.
- It is a choice we make.
- It involves self-inflicted pain that prevents happiness and peace.
- It is a form of self-imposed bondage to feelings of bitterness and resentment.
- It keeps you from being the person God wants you to be.
- It is an act of pride.
- It is an act of rebellion against the will of God.

Consequences of an unforgiving spirit

1. It develops bitterness (Hebrews 12:14-15).
 - Bitterness turns to anger, resentment, hostility, and a will to retaliate.
 - We also become critical and suspicious.
 - All of our actions and attitudes are ultimately affected by these feelings.
 - Our mind becomes divided due to suspicion and anger.
 - We ultimately bear the brunt of our unforgiving spirit.
2. It affects prayer life.
 - God does not listen when we have an unforgiving heart (Mark 11:25).
 - God forgives us for our own sins (Matthew 6:9-13).
3. It affects our worship (Matthew 5: 23-24).
4. It affects our witnessing.
5. It affects our giving.

6. It blocks our spiritual growth.
7. It has detrimental effects on our health.
8. It affects all our relationships. You cannot receive or give love to anybody.

How do you deal with an unforgiving spirit?

1. Recognize it in your life.
2. Take it seriously.
3. Assume full responsibility.
4. Confess it honestly.
5. Acknowledge it as a sin.
6. Lay down your anger.
7. Ask God to forgive you.
8. Begin praying for the other person.
9. Ask them to forgive you, if they know of your unforgiving heart.
10. Don't let Satan trap you into rehashing the issue.

If you have truly forgiven, your feelings will change towards the other person. You will feel concern towards them and you will no longer be bitter or angry.

Conclusion

We are called to forgiveness because Christ forgave us first. An unforgiving spirit hurts the person who has it more than anyone else. We are called to remove that spirit from within us in order to be able to love all people, to be like our Lord, and to grow spiritually. We must recognize this spirit in our lives, pray fervently for God to remove it from us, and confess it as a sin.

Discussion Points/Activities

1. What are some situations in your life where you may not have forgiven someone?
2. How is your lack of forgiveness hurting you?
3. How can you develop forgiveness for that person?
4. Do you think you will be able to approach this person and talk to them again?