

BROTHERLY LOVE IS TOUGH

Love between brothers has been volatile ever since the fall of Adam. If one looks carefully at the story of Cain and Abel, you can see the incredible struggle within these brothers' hearts - a struggle resulting in alienation and death.

Jesus viewed love for one another as a proof of our love for Him. We all know how difficult this is. It is one thing to tolerate those with whom we have limited exposure, but when a close brother or sister is offended or feels unloved, the heart ramifications are huge.

Ephesians 4 fleshes out the desire Jesus had for His disciples to live in love. Like John's Gospel and his letters, Ephesians attempts to explain the gravity of failure in being one in unity, the very thing Jesus prayed for His followers before delivering Himself to be crucified (John 17).

"Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity. He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need.

"Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for building up according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you." - Ephesians 4

KIND

Do you consider yourself a kind person? Is kindness easy or difficult for you?

What are some things that you consider to be acts of kindness?

When you think about your upbringing would "kind" be one of the attributes of your home?

TENDER-HEARTED

What things make your heart hard?

What things touch your heart to make it pliable?

Who is the most tender-hearted person that you know?

Would you consider yourself a tender-hearted person?

FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER

The picture here is one of being lavish in our forgiveness because of the forgiveness which has been poured out upon us.

Do you have any grudges that you have been unable to release?

Are you by nature forgiving or vindictive for pay back?

What are your personal qualifications for forgiveness?

What are some "roots of bitterness" that come about with lack of forgiveness?

As best as we know how we must love our brother from the heart. While this is difficult (and sometimes can seem hopeless) we must be at peace with one another as much as we possibly can. May God give you the grace to be released from bitterness which comes from lack of forgiveness.