

DEALING WITH HOSTILITY

Many individuals who come for counseling discover that they are angry inside. They often have pent-up hostilities of which they were not really aware; however, in the process of counseling or from a personality test their hostilities come to light. Here are some suggestions to help deal with these hidden hostilities.

1. Seek to determine who is the major focus of these hostilities. Many individuals develop hostilities toward parents, brothers, or sisters. Once the person on whom the hostilities are focused is discovered, some definite steps can be taken to handle these negative feelings.
2. Meditate on Romans 12:17-21. Basic to most of our hostility is a desire for revenge. Give this desire over to the Lord, and ask His forgiveness for harboring this anger in your heart (I John 1:9).
3. The Bible teaches that we are to go to the individuals that we have sinned against or who have sinned against us and be reconciled to them (Matthew 5:22-24; 18:15).
 - a. Write out your confession so you can have the wording exactly in mind.
 - b. Make your confession of harboring anger and resentment in your heart and ask the person to forgive you.
4. Actively seek to love the persons you have harbored this anger against. Seek ways to communicate this love in actions and words that they can understand and accept (John 13:34-35; Romans 12:20-21; I Peter 3:9).
5. Thank God for this emotional problem in your life (I Thessalonians 5:18)! Seek to see how He is going to use it for your benefit (Romans 8:28).

NOTE: "Give," "go," "love," and "thank" (Numbers 2-5) are all active steps of the will and are very positive, leading to release and joy.
6. There will still be times of anger in your life. These may be open hostilities or inner feelings. Recognize and identify these feelings for what they are, and immediately seek to be reconciled to the other person. Confess your anger and communicate your feelings. By verbalizing your feelings in a controlled manner, you can keep the hostility from growing. Open communication is most important. (Example, say "When you do that, I feel _____," or "Anger is my problem _____.")
7. Anger is the resulting emotion when our self-worth is attacked. A person who has low self-esteem will tend to react with more hostility than one who has high self-esteem. Seek to build your sense of self-worth so it will not be so fragile. Meditate on God's love for you and His value of you as a person (Ephesians 1:1, 18).