

QUESTIONS CHRISTIANS ASK
WHY DO WE THROW ROCKS AT EACH OTHER?
EPHESIANS 4:25-32



The Heart of the Matter

Ours is a strange generation. Spoiled might be a better word. There are more churches today than ever before. We have an abundance of good teaching, close fellowship, support groups for a wide spectrum of needs, caring Christians, and the hope of even more well-trained young men and women soon to be graduated from excellent and dedicated institutions. In the United States, the opportunities for employment and career advancement have seldom been better, and the challenge to reach a lost world for Christ has never been greater or brighter. And yet . . . infighting, negativity, and hurtful assaults between Christians are at an all-time high. At a time when we have every reason to pull together and work in harmony to get the job done, it seems as though some would much rather weaken the ranks and hinder our effectiveness. Today, let's go back to some of the basics that our indulged era seems to have forgotten.



Discovering the Way

1. Statement of the Problem

When little boys stand on the riverside and throw rocks at unsuspecting frogs for fun, we laugh. But when adults hurl insults at each other, we frown. Sadly, even Christians stand on the bank throwing rocks at each other. We throw some of these verbal stones in sarcastic sport. We throw some out of anger to pay others back. And we throw other painful rocks in self-righteous indignation, like the religious leaders who wanted to stone the woman caught in adultery (John 8:3-11). In the end, the way Christians sometimes treat each other turns people away from Christ instead of toward Him.



Tools for Digging Deeper



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2. Some Insights into the Solution (Ephesians 4:25–32)

Christians must live with two warring natures—the old man and the new man. Like garments, these two men hang in the inner closet of our lives—the repugnant garment of our fallen nature and the resplendent one that Jesus has given us. By means of the indwelling Holy Spirit, Christians can choose to put on the new man. To help us, Paul explained:

- Four Contrasts That Warn Us (Ephesians 4:25–30)

- Six Negatives That Tear Us Down (4:31)

- Three Positives That Build Us Up (4:32)



GETTING TO THE ROOT
Bitter and Sweet Fruit

Paul wrote about negative and positive traits in Ephesians 4:31–32. What makes those traits so powerful, either to destroy or build up? Let's examine these words in the Greek in order to understand their original meanings.

BAD FRUIT

Bitterness, *pikria*, refers to the inedible, bitter fruit that some plants produce.¹ Thus, bitterness poisons relationships.

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Wrath, *thumos*, refers to a strong, passionate, sometimes violent wave of fury. **Anger**, *orgay*, refers to a constant state of heightened anger toward someone.² Wrath and anger work together to sweep away love like a rushing torrent.

Clamor, *krangay*, refers to one or more voices shouting loudly as in a quarrel.³

Slander, *blasphemia*, is harmful, abusive, false words meant to destroy someone's reputation.⁴

Malice, *kakia*, refers to a vicious, mean-spirited mind-set toward another, including hatred and wishing the worst for someone.⁵ Malice destroys fellowship.

GOOD FRUIT

Kindness, *xraystos*, describes a loving, benevolent attitude toward others.⁶

Tenderheartedness, *eusplagxnos*, speaks of having softhearted, compassionate feelings toward others.⁷

Forgiveness, *xarizomai*, is probably the most crucial trait that maintains the unity of the church. Forgiveness conveys showing oneself to be gracious by freely forgiving, just as Christ forgives.⁸



Starting Your Journey

The primary distinguishing marks of a Christian are love and unity. We live out our faith before a watching world. What they see will influence their eternal destinies, either for good or for evil. The Lord has given His church quite a responsibility: to draw others to Him by loving and forgiving each other. Therefore, let's put down our rocks and pick up our crosses!

Do you have rocks aimed at anyone? If so, how can you turn your negatives that tear others down into positives that build others up?

ENDNOTES

1. Frederick William Danker, ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 813.
2. Danker, ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 461, 720.
3. Danker, ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 565.
4. Danker, ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 178.
5. Danker, ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 500.
6. Danker, ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 1090.
7. Danker, ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 413.
8. Danker, ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 1078.