

Ephesians 4:32

We have just seen where Paul has instructed us on the do's and don'ts of the Christian life. Verse 31 tells us what not to do and verse 32 tells us what we should do. My mother always said that we should always tell people what they should do in addition to what they should not be doing. It is important to know that in life, rules are mostly the "don'ts", but more and more they are wording things as "you must do". People understand what they are required to do more easily than what they are asked not to do.

Here Paul gives us just three things that he feels will allow us to be successful in our relationship to others and therefore better to share Christ with our family and friends.

1. Allowing the Spirit control, and avoiding bad behavior, we act like God toward others – vs. 32
 - a. Be kind to one another – Being kind is more than just not being unkind or mean. It has a broader sense of self-sacrifice. *Phil 2:3-4* – We are commanded to put others ahead of ourselves. We are to be thoughtful of others. That is active thinking. We are to seek out ways to be kind and seeing what we can do for others. *Rom 15:2* – We see here where we are to please our neighbor. And notice it is not for our good, but for their good. We are also commanded to accept one another (*Rom 15:7*). This is a hard one. It is difficult for us to accept those who are different. But Christ loved us and accepted us just as we are.
 - b. Tenderhearted – Here is a word we do not use often. The definition says, easily moved by another's distress, compassionate, caring, feeling sympathy for another. To be tenderhearted is not weak or sissy. It takes a great deal of understanding to feel someone else's pain.
 - c. Forgiving – This is the hardest and most difficult to do consistently. See the forgiveness is not based on anything the offending person has or has not done. It is totally dependent on our understanding of what Christ did for us on the cross. To forgive others is really showing the world you understand God's love to you. If you understand that God loved you unconditionally and forgave you unconditionally, then you can forgive unconditionally. The problem we have is we tend to be quick to say, "I forgive you", but put strings on it. Like I forgive you "if", or I forgive you "when", or some other thing you must do to get our forgiveness. We want to "make sure" that the forgiveness we give is either earned or deserved. Nothing is further from God's truth about forgiveness. Forgiveness cannot be earned; it is like grace and mercy, it is just given, freely and willingly.