

A Festered Heart: Forgiveness For the New Year

CENTRAL QUESTION:

How does unforgiveness begin, where does it lead, and what must we do to be freed so we can move forward into 2026?

I. OPENING TESTIMONY & THANKSGIVING

Key Scripture referenced: 2 Samuel 13:34 (context of Absalom)

Brief notes:

- Pastor Colin opens on New Year's Eve with gratitude for life, ministry fruit (baptisms, salvations, outreach).
- Sets tone: thanksgiving leads into a sober call to examine hurts that hold us back.

II. SCRIPTURE CONTEXT & PASSAGES READ

Primary passages used:

- 2 Samuel 13 (Amnon, Tamar, Absalom) — narrative of sin, hurt, and revenge
- 2 Samuel 14–15 (Absalom's return, rise to power, rebellion) — consequences of festering anger
- Psalm 38:5 — fester/festering imagery
- Matthew 6 (Lord's Prayer) — “forgive us as we forgive” principle

Supplemental mention: Psalm 3 (David's wilderness lament)

III. DEFINITION: “A FESTERED HEART”

- Webster/ordinary meaning: wound becomes infected; negative feelings (anger, resentment) worsen when ignored.
- Sermon application: small slights left unaddressed accumulate and harden into ongoing bitterness.

IV. ILLUSTRATIONS

Short real-life stories used to illustrate how small things build:

- Airport incident (being videotaped) — seeming trivial hurt that began to fester.
- Offhand church/comment about car/marriage — everyday jabs that accumulate.
- Contrast: large-scale ministry fruit (kids saved, outreach meals) vs. personal wounds that undermine community.

V. THE CASE STUDY: AMNON — TAMAR — ABSALOM

(Trace of events)

Timeline and key moments:

- Amnon's lust and rape of Tamar (2 Sam 13) → Tamar shamed/disgraced.
- Absalom shelters Tamar but does not confront Amnon (v.22) — silence breeds hatred.
- Absalom's two-year separation, plotted revenge, and eventual murder of Amnon.
- Absalom's return, political maneuvering, pride and rebellion (2 Sam 14–15) → kingdom turmoil.

VI. THREE SPIRITUAL DANGERS OF UNFORGIVENESS

(Main sermon points)

- 1) Unforgiveness leads to a festering heart — the wound grows and magnifies over time.
 - 2) Unforgiveness produces isolation — the offended withdraws or leaves community.
 - 3) Unforgiveness births pride — self-exaltation, moral blindness, and rationalizing sin.
- Result: Unforgiveness often culminates in further sin, broken relationships, and communal harm.

VII. BIBLICAL COUNTERPOINTS & TEACHING ON FORGIVENESS

- Jesus' model (Luke/Matthew): "Father, forgive them..." as ultimate humility.
- Lord's Prayer teaching: God's forgiveness linked to our willingness to forgive (Matthew 6).
- Humility clarified: not self-deprecation but decreasing so Christ increases (John the Baptist model).

VIII. PRACTICAL APPLICATION (How to move forward)

Daily practices:

- Expose wounds to God's glory — intentional worship and vulnerability before God.
- Choose humility: seek to lift Christ and decrease self-focused resentment.
- Use community: come to the altar, ask for help, confess and pursue reconciliation where possible.
- Recognize ordinary moments (breath, work, relationships) as opportunities for God to heal and redirect.

IX. STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE FOR PERSONAL FOLLOW-THROUGH

1. Admit the hurt and name it to God.
2. Decide to forgive (even if feelings lag behind).
3. Seek God's presence intentionally (prayer/worship) to replace resentment.
4. Pursue reconciliation if appropriate; if not possible, release the person to God.
5. Re-engage community—do not isolate.

KEY TAKEAWAY:

Unforgiveness starts small but grows poisonous: it festers, isolates, and inflates pride—ultimately producing sin. The way forward is humility, exposure to God's presence, and a deliberate practice of forgiveness so we can enter the new year and community renewed.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:

- What small slights have I allowed to grow into a larger wound?
- Where am I isolating myself because of offense?
- What would humility look like in this situation?
- Who do I need to bring before God or reconcile with this year?

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES FOR FURTHER STUDY:

2 Samuel 13:1–39 | 2 Samuel 14–15 | Psalm 38:5 | Matthew 6:9–15 | Psalm 3 | Luke 23:34