

MARRIAGE IS NOT FOR WIMPS

**MARITAL COMMUNICATION
CLASS**

SESSION 4

Reminders

Hidden Issues

Hidden Issues – Deep, core level issues that take more work to uncover and deal with.

- Control and Power
- Needing and Caring
- Recognition
- Commitment
- Integrity
- Acceptance

Two Key Concepts

1. **Team** – We must view our marriages with a team mentality
2. **Safety** – Anything can be said in the context of a safe environment

Table Talk Time

- Did you have the opportunity to convey constructive criticism to your spouse this week? How did it go?
- What insights did you gain from the homework?
- Were you able to identify any hidden issues in your marriage? If so, how have they been playing themselves out?

Forgiveness: The Restoration of Oneness

Opening Thoughts

“Forgiveness has been described as a quality by which one ceases to feel resentment against another for a wrong he or she has committed against oneself. Forgiveness can be granted with or without the other asking for forgiveness. Some people also believe that persons can forgive themselves that it is possible to forgive groups of people, or that it is possible to be forgiven by God.”

– Wikipedia

Opening Thoughts

“Always forgive your enemies -- nothing annoys them so much.”

- Oscar Wilde

“Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea, until they have something to forgive.”

– C.S. Lewis

Opening Thoughts

“Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.”

- Matthew 18:21-22

“Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”

- Ephesians 4:32

Forgiveness: Thesis

Our ability to forgive one another has its genesis in God's forgiveness of us. The forgiveness, grace and mercy granted to us in Christ forms the basis of our security, our sure footing and our precedence to forgive others. **Failing to embrace this concept will set you up for significant future frustrations.**

Why Spend Time on Forgiveness?

- You will have the opportunity to practice the **discipline of forgiveness** with your spouse more than with any other person on earth
- An unforgiving spirit will put a marriage on life support
- Good communication requires trust and safety. Trust and safety are eroded when one or both parties are unwilling to forgive.

The Logic of Forgiveness

Before we can properly discuss forgiveness in the context of marriage we need to spend some time better understanding the logic of forgiveness.

Our State as Sinners

- A common mistake is our failure to grasp the depth of our fallen nature.
- We compare ourselves to the most heinous members of society (Hitler, Dahmer, Bin Laden, etc..) & we come off looking pretty good.
- Our point of comparison should be God, not another human being.

Our State as Sinners

Romans 3:10-18 - As it is written: "There is **no one** righteous, not even one; there is **no one who understands, no one who seeks God**. All have turned away; they have together become worthless; there is **no one who does good**, not even one. Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit. The poison of vipers is on their lips. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know. There is no fear of God before their eyes."

Our State as Sinners

“Christianity tells people to repent and promises them forgiveness. It therefore has nothing (as far as I know) to say to people who do not know they have done anything to repent of and who do not feel that they need forgiveness.”

– C.S. Lewis

The Consequences of Our Sin

- Romans 6:23 - “For the wages of sin is **death**, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
- Hebrews 9:22 - “...the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is **no forgiveness.**”

God's Plan to Deal with our Sin - Forgiveness & Restoration

- John 3:16 – “For **God so loved** the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him **shall not perish** but have eternal life.”
- 1 John 1:9 – “If we **confess our sins**, he is faithful and just and **will forgive us** our sins and **purify us** from all unrighteousness.”

God's Plan to Deal with our Sin - Forgiveness & Restoration

- Ephesians 1:3-8 – “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has **blessed us** in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For **He chose us** in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love **He predestined us** to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will – to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has **freely given us** in the One He loves. In Him we have **redemption through His blood**, the **forgiveness of sins**, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that **He lavished on us** with all wisdom and understanding.”

God's Plan to Deal with our Sin - Forgiveness & Restoration

- Colossians 2:13–15 - **When you were dead** in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God **made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins**, having **cancelled** the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; **he took it away**, nailing it to the cross. And having **disarmed** the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

The Obligation Between Men

In light of what God has done for us, what obligation do we have to our spouse?

The Obligation Between Men

- Colossians 3:12-14 - Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved; clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, **humility**, gentleness and patience. **Bear with each** other and **forgive** whatever grievances you may have against one another. **Forgive as the Lord forgave you.**

The Obligation Between Men

- Ephesians 4:31-32 - “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. And be **kind** to one another, **tender-hearted**, **forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you**”

The Obligation Between Men

- Hebrews 12: 14 - Make **every effort to live in peace** with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.

The Obligation Between Men

“To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable, because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you.”

- C.S. Lewis

Keys to Forgiveness

- **Recognize that time alone does not heal**
 - "We have a strange illusion that mere time cancels sin. But mere time does nothing either to the fact or to the guilt of a sin." – C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*
 - "Every uncorrected error and unrepented sin is, in its own right, a fountain of fresh error and fresh sin flowing on to the end of time." – C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*

Keys to Forgiveness

- **If you are the offended party**
 - If we are the offended party, our responsibility is to take the first step.
 - “And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother” (Matthew 18:15).
 - We should do it in love and meekness, but you must do it.

Keys to Forgiveness

- **If you are the offender**
 - If we are the offended party, our responsibility is to take the first step.
 - “If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering” (Matthew 5:23-24).

Keys to Forgiveness

- **Give up our right to get even.**
 - “Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.” - Romans 12:17
 - Forgiveness is more than pretending the offense didn't happen, or pretending it didn't hurt.
 - Forgiveness is facing the fact that it did happen, admitting the hurt, **and deciding to move toward oneness.**

Keys to Forgiveness

- **Don't hold it over the person's head.**
 - Forgiveness should not be not partial. We don't mouth forgiveness with our lips but hold onto resentment with our hearts.
 - "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." - Romans 12:18

Keys to Forgiveness

- **Become understanding of others**
 - Forgiveness begins with learning to be understanding of others and their flaws.
 - We know how proud, how selfish, how spiteful, how jealous, how inconsiderate and how inept we can be.
 - People who refuse to forgive may have the foolish notion that they themselves are almost perfect.

Keys to Forgiveness

- **Become understanding of others**

“If we are to forgive freely, we need a tolerance of others as generous as the tolerance we display toward our own errors. It is remarkable how understanding we can be of our own flops in interpersonal dealings – we didn’t intend the error or it happened in a moment of stress, or we weren’t feeling right that day, or we’ll know better next time. We tend to see ourselves not for what we are but for what we strive to be, whereas we see others for what they are”

- Alan Loy McGinnis, *The Friendship Factor*. pp. 159-160.

Keys to Forgiveness

- **Pray, Pray, Pray**
- **Humility**

What Forgiveness is Not

- Forgiveness does not absolve one of the consequences of poor decisions.
- Forgiveness is not forgetting.

What Does It Mean to “Forget”?

- When we truly forgive, the wrong will not dominate our thoughts anymore. When it comes to our minds, we will be able to dismiss it promptly. We won't keep reliving it and talking about it to others.
- Some people say they have forgiven, but they can talk about little else. They want to keep rehearsing the awful thing that was done to them. Their inability to stop thinking about it and talking about it exposes their lack of forgiveness.

What Does It Mean to “Forget”?

- The offense won't hurt anymore. The fact will be there, but the deep emotions will be gone.
- We can think of it without bitterness and resentment, without feeling the pain all over again.
- Note – this may take time!

What Does It Mean to “Forget”?

- We will be able to treat the offender as though the offense never happened. Not pretend that it never happened. It did happen, and we need to be honest about that. But treat him as though it never happened.
- If we forgive as God forgives and keep no record of the wrong, then we will be free to reach out with warmth, kindness, openness and trust to restore the relationship.

Table Talk Time

- Growing up, did you see forgiveness modeled in your house? How has your family of origin shaped your concept of forgiveness?
- Are you harboring bitterness toward someone as a result of an unforgiving spirit?
- How has the following statement played out in your marriage? “We tend to see ourselves not for what we are but for what we strive to be, whereas we see others for what they are” - Alan Loy McGinnis, *The Friendship Factor*

CARY & SARAH TUCKER

Table Talk Time

- Practice the speaker/listener technique (each couple takes turns practicing the Speaker / Listener in front of the other couples):
- Is there a specific offense that the Lord has brought to your mind where you need *to ask for* forgiveness?
- Is there a specific offense that the Lord has brought to your mind where you need *to grant* forgiveness?
- Another safe topic.