

WHEN MARRIAGE AND MERCY COLLIDE

The Power of the Gospel in Marriage

Choosing Forgiveness

The Gospel Hope of Staying Together

Grace Fellowship Church / Pastor Brad Bigney / November 8, 2009

Forgiveness is not all about you trying to *forget* what your spouse or that other person did **TO you**... instead forgiveness is your choice to *remember* what Christ *already* did **FOR you** on the cross and to act on that by extending that same forgiveness out to your spouse regardless of how you feel!

Three Steps to move towards forgiveness

I. You Start by Looking Past the Other Person and Back to God

Forgiveness has nothing to do with us and everything to do with God
- He is the author of forgiveness.

Matthew 18:21-36 - The struggle with forgiveness is not new!

If you don't understand the depth of YOUR OWN sin against God and how much He's forgiven you, then you'll never have what it takes to forgive other people around you.

Ephesians 4:30-32 ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. ³² And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, *even as* God in Christ forgave you."

Colossians 3:13 "... if anyone has a complaint against another; *even as* Christ forgave you, so you also must do."

Matthew 18:33 "Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow servant, *just as* I had mercy on you?"

“Since Christ’s new covenant with His church is created by and sustained by blood-bought grace, therefore, human marriages are meant to showcase that new-covenant grace. And the way husbands and wives showcase it is by resting in the experience of God’s grace and bending it out from a vertical experience with God into a horizontal experience with their spouse. In other words, in marriage you live hour by hour in glad dependence on God’s forgiveness and justification and promised future grace, and you bend it out toward your spouse hour by hour—as an extension of God’s forgiveness and justification and promised help... take the vertical grace of forgiveness and justification and bend them out horizontally to your spouse. Marriage is meant to be a unique matrix for this display of God’s grace.” *This Momentary Marriage*, John Piper, p. 43, 47

II. You Stop Expecting Payment and You Choose to Absorb the Cost of Their Sin

Forgiveness is rooted in our Savior and His death on the cross, where He absorbed the cost of all our sin - past, present and future.

I Peter 2:9-10, 21-25 ⁹ But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰ who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy... For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: ‘Who committed no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth’; who when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness – by whose stripes we are healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.”

“Few things cut across the grain of human nature like forgiving others. Breathing is easy. Eating is fun. No one thinks twice about blinking their eyes. But forgiving others is sheer agony! It grates on our soul like fingernails on a chalkboard.” *To Love Mercy*, C. Samuel Storms, p. 153

True forgiveness looks the other person’s sin in the face - and then absorbs the cost of that sin by the power of God’s abundant grace.

“Forgiveness can be a costly activity. When you cancel a debt, it does not just simply disappear. Instead, you absorb a liability that someone else deserves to pay. Similarly, forgiveness requires that you absorb certain effects of another person’s sins and you release that person from liability to punishment. This is precisely what Christ accomplished on Calvary.” *Peacemaker*, Ken Sande, p. 163

Forgiven sinners forgive sin!

- So why do so many Christians struggle with forgiving others?

“All of us get hurt from time to time, and most of us are hurt very badly at some point in our lives. But Christians have the incredible resource - and the responsibility to forgive. Not out of our own strength, but out of the strength God provides through our experience of His forgiveness... We can pray that God will help us love that person. Does this sound difficult? It's not difficult. It's impossible, unless you and I have *feasted* on the cross of Christ.” *A Call to Die*, David Nasser, p. 216

- Are you feasting on the cross of Christ regularly in your life?

III. You Refuse to Let All the Sin in Your Relationship Define or Defile the Whole Thing

You work hard to see past it, and to see grace and mercy in the midst of it all.

“Picture our marriage as a grassy field. You enter it at the beginning full of hope and joy... But before long, you begin to step in cow pies. Some seasons of your marriage they may seem to be everywhere. Late at night they are especially prevalent. These are the sins and flaws and idiosyncrasies and weaknesses and annoying habits in you and in your spouse. You try to forgive them and endure them with grace. But they have a way of dominating the relationship. It may not even be true, but sometimes it feels like that's all there is—cow pies [that's manure piles – for those of you that didn't grow up on a farm]. Noel and I have come to believe that the combination of forbearance and forgiveness leads to the creation of a compost pile. That's where you shovel the cow pies.

You both look at each other and simply admit that there are a lot of cow pies. But you say to each other: ‘You know, there is more to this relationship than cow pies. And we are losing sight of that because we keep focusing on these cow pies. Let's throw them all in the compost pile. When we have to, we will go there and smell it and feel bad and deal with it the best we can.’ And then we are going to walk away from that pile and set our eyes on the rest of the field. We will pick some favorite paths and hills that we know are not strewn with cow pies. And we will be thankful for the part of the field that is sweet.

Our hands may be dirty. And our backs may ache from all the shoveling. But one thing we know: We will not pitch our tent by the compost pile. We will only go there when we must. This is a gift of grace that we will give each other again and again and again...” *This Momentary Marriage*, John Piper, p. 59

