

4 Promises of Forgiveness

What does it mean to forgive?

1. I will not bring it up to you again to use in a hurtful way
2. I will not talk about it to others who are not a part of the solution
3. I will not dwell on it myself
4. I will not allow this hurt to keep me from rebuilding closeness with you

Forgiveness is oxygen in the lungs of marriage. You breathe in mercy from the Lord for your iniquities. You exhale forgiveness for your spouse. Both of you urgently need it. But the reality is that couples often hold their breath in two ways: by refusing to express humble and earnest sorrow for their sin and by withholding heartfelt and regular forgiveness. It's no wonder many marriages are slowly suffocating and dying.

Forgiveness in marriage must be as regular as breathing. Facilitating forgiveness is part and parcel of marriage counseling. It's the counselor's responsibility to gauge their ability to forgive and help them make forgiveness and reconciliation as vital and common to their relationship as breakfast is in their day.

But here's where the metaphor breaks down. Forgiveness, unlike breathing, does not come easily or naturally. Depending on the transgression(s), it can often be quite complex and requires an understanding of the impact of the sin, how it may have redefined the marriage, and how it has devastated the couple. Infidelity, betrayal, abandonment, and a violation of trust and intimacy deeply change the course of a couple's marriage.

Counsel for Couples: *A Biblical and Practical Guide for Marriage Counseling*, Jonathan Holmes