



The Other Side of Forgiveness

Clear Communication

CCC Course - Week 3

“If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we should find in each man’s life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility.”

—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

We will add to that quote that if we could read the secret history of our family, especially our spouse there would be enough sorrow and suffering to disarm all hostility. We would also find that our spouse is NOT our enemy to begin with.

What does forgiveness have to do with communication? Well, the last time you were angry or upset with your spouse, how easy was it to talk with him or her? When you are holding on to grudges against someone is it challenging to communicate open and honestly with that person?

By the way, the definition of “grudge” is: a persistent feeling of ill will or resentment resulting from a past insult or injury.

You might say that you don’t need to forgive your spouse, and that’s great! But if there is someone else you need to forgive, including yourself, that energy will block the depth of closeness and connection you have with anyone, including your spouse.

To say that not forgiving someone else is not affecting your marriage relationship is to say that a leprous disease is not contagious. That’s not to say that your spouse will contract the disease of “not forgiving” but he or she will feel the debilitating and sickening energy you are sending out that goes along with holding on to negative feelings about others.

No matter who we need to forgive, whether it is ourselves, our spouse, family, friends or acquaintances, it's critical that we learn to forgive on a daily or weekly basis. The longer we choose to not forgive, the longer it may take to ride ourselves of this negative energy.

Forgiveness is not necessarily for the alleged perpetrator or the one who did the "supposed" wrong, it's for YOU! It's to clear your mind, body and spirit from the poisoning energy of holding on.

In this week's call, the story of David from the bible who was about to wipe out a huge household of Nabal teaches us the idea that when we don't forgive it hurts ourselves. David said, "...blessed be thou, dear Abigail, who hast kept me this day from sinning against the Lord." When we sin (by not forgiving as David first chose), we don't have a clear conscience, and it affects ALL of our relationships.

So as you go through the exercises in this workbook and wonder how forgiveness has anything to do with communication, remember it has EVERYTHING to do with communication and connection on a deep level.

Forgiveness will give you CLEAR, more transparent and open communication with your spouse and others. There will not be that negative energy lurking in the shadows of your soul.

"Forgiveness is unlocking the door to set someone free and . . . realizing you were the prisoner."
—Max Lucado

May you find freedom and doors opening to the most loving and joyful relationships possible with yourself, spouse, family, friends and loved ones as you work through the recommended exercises for this week.

Be a Marriage Maker not breaker!

Andy and Jennifer Smith

Sometimes it's obvious that you need to forgive someone. Even when you have tried, how do you know that you haven't entirely forgiven someone?

- You THINK about the event or person a lot!
- You TALK about the issue a lot.
- You still have STRONG EMOTIONS attached to the event or person.
- You may be suppressing thoughts of the person or the event and may not be aware of any of the points above. But you are seeing a pattern of a particular emotion that is linked to the issue that comes up a lot!

We often are taught about how to repent, but not so much how to forgive. Before we get into how to forgive, let's figure out who you may need to forgive by making a forgiveness list.

Forgiveness List Exercise

Simply write the person's name, including yourself if needed, and what it is you might need to forgive them for. Optional: To go a little deeper, you may write why you feel that you should forgive them, especially if you struggle to forgive them more than others.

Practical Tips for Forgiveness

So how do you forgive when you feel so wronged? This next activity will help you process your negative feelings towards someone. We suggest choosing the three people from your forgiveness list whom you feel you need to forgive the most.

Each day (over 3 days this week) choose ONE of those three people to do this activity for the second, third and fifth tips. Take as much time as you need on each person. (Use a voice recorder if you prefer rather than writing and save in a file on your phone or computer.)

- First, you must acknowledge your hurt feelings. You may not be able to control your initial reaction to being hurt, but you can choose to act, not react, beyond the first negative emotions. Are you going to hang on to the pain or anger and continue to replay the hurtful situation over and over in your mind? Are you going to allow this to keep you from enjoying today?
- Second, try to understand the other person's circumstances in life. Did the person hurt you by accident? Was there a misunderstanding? Did his or her own stress and grief cause them to hit a breaking point and lose control? Maybe the person had some emotional or mental problems and needed some compassion. Whatever may have caused the hurtful incident, try to see the perpetrator from a different angle and write about it here:

- Third, as we work on forgiving someone else, we can focus on the situation instead of the person. We can think, "That was embarrassing to me," instead of "John really embarrassed me." Or, "It hurt my feelings to have some untrue things said about me," instead of "Katie hurt my feelings badly." We become emotionally stronger when we can separate our feelings from the hurtful situation. Our own self-esteem and confidence will increase when we let go of the feelings and thoughts that continue to hurt us long after an offense occurs.

How can I focus on the situation about this person rather than the person? Write about it here:

- Fourth, we may need some extra strength that comes from prayer, writing in a journal, meditation, or energy healing or emotional release work. Try all the wonderful options at your disposal to restore your well-being and peace. God knows your pain and will help you develop a feeling of forgiveness if you ask Him.

Even though the energy of not forgiving may have piled up for weeks, months or even years, we believe through Jesus Christ that healing can be immediate. As we strengthen our faith, this is possible. Write your feelings about this below.

However, healing and forgiveness can take time. Write your favorite options for extra help and strength like the ones above in tip four or others that work best for you or you are open to trying. Be willing to give these a try if you still have negative thoughts or emotions after this week's work.

- Fifth, repent from your negative thoughts, feelings and energy towards the other person and ask what you might have done to cause the other person to mistreat you as they did.

You might be thinking “WHAT? Did I read this right?” or maybe this isn’t a new idea to you. This is similar to the second tip in this list about understanding where the other person is coming from.

Turn on some relaxing music, do some soul searching, and if any of the words in this fifth tip ring true to you, journal your thoughts here and commit to repentance if needed.

Richard G. Scott tells us: "Bitterness and hatred are harmful. They produce much that is destructive. They postpone the relief and healing you yearn for. Through rationalization and self-pity, *they can transform a victim into an abuser.* Let God be the judge—you cannot do it as well as He can."

A Word on Pride

Pride, self-pity and forgiveness are very interlinked meaning if you have trouble with one of these you may have trouble with another. Below is an inspirational and eye-opening quote about pride. After reading it, you may wish to do the optional activity at the end of this workbook.

"Most of us think of pride as self-centeredness, conceit, boastfulness, arrogance, or haughtiness. All of these are elements of the sin, but the heart, or core, is still missing. The central feature of pride is enmity—enmity toward God and enmity toward our fellow men. Enmity means 'hatred toward, hostility to, or a state of opposition.'

Another major portion of this very prevalent sin of pride is enmity toward our fellowmen. We are tempted daily to elevate ourselves above others and diminish them. . . .

Pride . . . is manifest in so many ways, such as fault-finding, gossiping, backbiting, murmuring, living beyond our means, envying, coveting, withholding gratitude and praise that might lift another, and being unforgiving and jealous. . . .

Selfishness is one of the more common faces of pride. 'How everything affects me' is the center of all that matters—self-conceit, self-pity, worldly self-fulfillment, self-gratification, and self-seeking. . . .

Another face of pride is contention. Arguments, fights, unrighteous dominion, generation gaps, divorces, spouse abuse, riots, and disturbances all fall into this category of pride."

-Ezra T. Benson

Optional Exercise: Overcoming Pride

If any of the traits of pride felt familiar or resonate with you as manifesting in your life and within your relationships, choose ONE of those and make a plan to focus and overcome that weakness. Make your plan to focus on this over the next two weeks. Make it simple and doable. For example, you might plan to be aware of when this trait manifests itself and take a few minutes to journal the situation, who it involved and how you felt. It may be an awareness plan. Or you could make a plan of how you want to feel and what you would want to do or say when a prideful situation manifests itself. Don't stress over this weakness. Be creative in how you can work through it.

My Plan:
