

Forgiving a Spouse

The key to the Christian life is forgiveness. It is not only about God forgiving us, but about us forgiving one another. It is about us forgiving not only each other, but even our enemies. As the Apostle Paul sat in chains in a Roman prison for crimes he didn't commit, he said,

³¹ Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

³² And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Ephesians 4:32

That's it. That says it in a nutshell. Why must you forgive? Because we told to "be kind to one another forgiving one another even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you". When another wrongs you, forgiving them is usually the best thing for you as well. To carry angst, hatred, disappointment, and hope for revenge against another will destroy you! It will eat you up from the inside out.

¹⁸ If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

¹⁹ Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. (Romans 12:18-19)

Often in a marriage when one party has hurt another, the hurt party must look ahead to a life without that person. Imagine it. If the hurt party is really honest with themselves, they are able to see that their life really will be better for THEM if they stay with the party that hurt them. It is tough going it alone! This is especially true if the wrongful spouse is repentant. The repentant spouse cannot fix this wrong alone. It requires the forgiveness of the faithful party.

Not always but usually a spouse strays into intimacies with another because the marriage has grown cold. The straying spouse had a desperate need (and I mean desperate) for affection and emotional satisfaction that they did not find with the faithful spouse. Being faithful doesn't just mean "not having sex with another". It means being available emotionally to help that other person feel loved and accepted. This takes great honesty. It is not ALWAYS the case, but it is usually or often the case. It is hard to see our own wrongdoing. The Psalmist says,

²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:

²⁴ And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23). There is none righteous no not one. (Romans 3:10) My father used to tell me, "it takes two

to tango". He was trying to tell me that none of us is perfect and when things fall apart, they've been falling apart for quite a while with both parties pretending the gap didn't exist. It usually requires a bit of dishonesty to lay all the blame at one set of feet.

Another reason it is so important to forgive others is because Jesus Himself said we will be measured by our own ability to forgive.

14 For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. Matthew 6:14-15

Forgiveness is not the easy way to take care of a wrong, but it is the right way. It is the Christian way. It is the divine way. When you exercise forgiveness you are rising above yourself and you enter a heavenly realm.

If a Christ-Follower strays and cheats on a spouse they have forgotten for a season their own true identity. They are righteous in Christ and that is their true identity. To act in any way other than in righteousness is a temporary lapse of understanding who we are in Jesus.

21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. 2 Corinthians 5:21

Forgiveness is healthy for you whether the wrongful spouse is repentant or not. But, I am not advocating staying with a non-repentant straying spouse. That is letting yourself continue to be abused. If both parties truly desire to see reconciliation in their marriage then undergoing counseling with a Biblically based Christian counselor is an absolute necessity.

The Biblical Definition of Forgiveness

What the Bible defines as forgiveness is much broader and more comprehensive than what the world believes. In Matthew 6:14 Jesus shows us what forgiveness really is: "For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you." The Greek word for forgive is "*aphiēmi*" which means "to send away," to "depart," or "to yield up" which means you send away from ever being in the presence of either party. That means that if my brother offends me and I forgive him, then I "send away" the offense from myself and from him so that it is never brought up again. If a person keeps bringing the same offense up then they have never really sent it away or they haven't truly forgiven you. True biblical and godly forgiveness is this; "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8) and "while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life" ([Rom 5:10](#)). The Greek word for "enemies" is literally "hated, hateful, hostile," and "opposing" so forgiveness is dying for someone while they still "hated or were hostile" toward you. That is what God calls forgiveness. We all hated God before we were saved because Paul writes that "while we were still enemies" of God He "died for us."¹

¹ Patheos.com

Now....is where and when the rubber meets the road in your Christian faith. What will you do with what Jesus has said?