

- A. Living in such close proximity as marriage, we are going to hurt each other, both intentionally and unintentionally. We are bound to offend each other. And when this happens there is only ONE way to make the relationship right again and that is forgiveness. It is impossible to have an on-going relationship without forgiveness!
- B. **Forgiveness is not a single ACT. It is a PROCESS.**
When someone says, "I forgive you," it does not make it happen immediately. It is more a statement of intention. As humans, our emotions get in the way. Forgiveness takes time and effort.

The **GOAL** of forgiveness – within a marriage – is **RECONCILIATION**:

Diagram of Process

A.



B. The Forgiveness Process:

- 1) Respectful Treatment – Words, Actions, Expressions; No “Cold Shoulder”; Stop Intentional Hurt
- 2) Honest Communication – Not Defensive / No Excuses or White Lies

Wrongdoer:

- 3) Apology – WITH A PLAN to avoid similar hurt in future. Ask partner for help.
- 4) Repair – You cannot UNDO act – but: Fix It / Replace it / Acts of Kindness

Injured Person:

- 3) Grieve – (the loss) – See Grief Process / Steps
- 4) Let Go – “Give up your right to hurt back”

5) Reconciliation – Communication & Patience, on both parts, is required throughout.

C. Getting Stuck

- 1) Grudge
- 2) No Apology

- D. **Balance** – Forgiveness can be off balance in two directions:
- 1) We can bear a grudge and refuse to forgive
 - 2) We can forgive too easily – we can pretend to be reconciled but we really are not.
 - 3) **The Third Option is to be Faithful to the Process.**



If the Process Doesn't Work (Taking Shortcuts):

- a. **No apology**
Forgiving over and over doesn't heal the emotions. This person will not feel close to his/her spouse.
- b. **Condescension**
A marriage where one forgives the other in an arrogant way will not really be reconciled.
- c. **Grudge**
Emotions have hardened into bitterness.

True forgiveness occurs when we each do our own work. We cannot do it all alone.

Forgiveness is not easy. It is not a quick act. It takes time and effort. But it is essential for our marriages to heal. Whether our issues are big or small the process is the same. If we need to forgive each other, now, we might ask ourselves, where are we in the process? And what do we need to do to make it work? If we have done everything we can, we may need to be patient. It takes both of us to completely forgive. In the meantime we can be personally at peace.

If one person continually forgives unilaterally the same problems will be repeated over and over without resolution. Sooner or later the one who keeps forgiving too easily will have had enough.

And, by this time there is usually such a long and painful history of wrongdoing that the "long-suffering spouse" goes to the opposite extreme and refuses to forgive no matter what.

So, forgiving too easily gives the marriage a **FALSE SENSE of security** and sets the relationship up for a big fall at some future date.

Other Issues:

- God's Forgiveness
- Anger at God
- Forgiving Ourselves
- "We cannot do our spouse's work for them."

No one is entitled to forgiveness. It is a free gift. One cannot demand a gift. It is a free gift to us from God (2 Cor. 5:17-19) and so we freely give it to each other.

We have to remember, however, that as humans, it may take time to forgive. As long as our injured spouse is sincerely working on the process, it is honest and therefore acceptable.

So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. – 2 Corinthians 5:16-19