

Forgiveness is at the Core of Every Happy Marriage

By - Doug Fields - Thriving Marriages Blog - March 14, 2022

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. –Matthew 18:21-22

One evening, as the husband was sitting quietly, reading his newspaper, his wife walked up behind him and whacked him with the back of her hand. "What was that for?" he asked. "That was for the piece of paper I found in your pants pocket!" she retorted. "It had the name Mary Lou written on it." "Oh, that was from two weeks ago, when I went to the racetrack," the man said. "Mary Lou was the name of the horse I bet on." The woman thought for a moment, then hung her head. "Oh, honey," she said quietly, "I'm so sorry. I should have known there was a good explanation."

A few days later the man was watching a ball game on TV when his wife walked up and whacked him on the head again. He asked, "What was that for?" She replied, "Your racehorse just called."

Face it: much of the heartbreak, and stress in our lives comes as the result of what other people do to us. We're all in this strange relational chaos together. We hurt others. Others hurt us. If you think you're the exception, you're not. You just lack the self-awareness to know that you're a crazy nut job like the rest of us.

The hurts we suffer can imprison and paralyze us. The hurt caused by another person's actions fills us with rage, depression, annoyance, or frustration. We replay the hurt over and over in our minds. Offering forgiveness when we've been hurt is difficult to do. *Yet, Jesus taught us that forgiving others is vital for our spiritual well-being.* He invites us to make it a priority not only to forgive but to keep forgiving...all the time if need be.

Why practice forgiveness? Here are some good reasons:

- **God commands us to forgive.** Forgiveness is a choice to obey. To withhold forgiveness is also a choice—to disobey.
- **When we don't forgive someone, it only hurts us more.** In hanging on to the wrong done to us, our sorrow and hurt will turn to resentment and bitterness and these always hurt us more than the other person.
- **If we don't forgive someone, the offense keeps coming back to haunt us again and again.**

I encourage you to forgive and keep on forgiving. It's the only way forward. It's the only path to freedom. Each time you forgive, you release a prisoner—and then find out the prisoner was actually you – YOU were in bondage to anger, resentment, and bitterness. Forgiveness is the action of cooperation with the Holy Spirit that sets you free.

GOING DEEPER:

1. What are some practical steps you could take to make forgiveness a regular part of your life?
2. Do you have someone in your life you can't imagine loving? Start by praying for them today.

FURTHER READING: Matthew 18:21-35; Job 5:2; Ephesians 4:31