

What Did You Expect?

Commitment #1 – We will give ourselves to a regular lifestyle of confession and forgiveness.

- The Need for Confession and Forgiveness – p. 71, 72-73
 - The Biblical Call – James 5:13-16
- A. The Grace of Confession (eight ways grace helps us when it comes to confession)
1. It is a grace to know right from wrong
 - *Knowing right from wrong means admitting that there is a standard to which we are held*
 2. It is a grace to understand the concept of indwelling sin
 - *Again, one of the most tempting fallacies is to think the problem is outside of us*
 3. It is a grace to have a properly functioning conscience
 - *It is a sign of God's grace when our consciences are sensitive and our hearts grieved at what we have become – at what we say and do – even in the small things*
 4. It is only grace that protects us from self-righteousness
 - *We all seem to suffer from spiritual hyperopia. In physical terms this means that you can only see objects far from the eye clearly. Spiritually it speaks of our tendency to see the sins of others more and to magnify them, and it is a sign of grace when we stop worrying about who is more righteous*
 - 5) It is a grace to see ourselves with accuracy
 - *Often times we deny we are angry or bitter when it is obvious even to others that we are*
 - 6) It is a grace to be willing to listen and consider criticism and rebuke
 - *It is easy to be defensive*
 - *“All of us carry inside ourselves and inner lawyer who is easily activated and quickly rises to our defense. We’ve been in one of those moments when someone is pointing out wrong in us, and although we are not speaking aloud, we have already begun a silent defense of ourselves against what they are saying.”*
 - *It takes much grace to silent the inner lawyer and to listen*
 - *Proverbs 18:13 – “If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame.”*
 - *Healthy relationships have two essential character qualities*
 - 1) *The Humility of Approachability – approachability is not an event – it is an atmosphere set by all we do and say, by our facial expressions, body language, etc.*
 - 2) *The Courage of Loving Honesty*
 7. It is a grace not to be paralyzed by regret

- It may be that as you examine yourself with regards to your marriage, you realize that it has been characterized by a deep, long-term pattern of sin that needs to be confessed and dealt with – *perhaps outward anger, bitter withdrawal, cutting words, etc.*
 - At such times we can be paralyzed by regret, guilt and shame – but grace frees us to deal with those things knowing they have already been forgiven by God in Christ
8. It is a grace to know that we can face our wrongs because Christ has carried our guilt and shame
- *Dealing with guilt and shame is what the Bible is all about, from Adam and Eve’s guilt and shame being covered in Genesis 3 to the sacrifices of Leviticus to the blood of Christ*
 - *Confession should not be seen as a scary thing we try to avoid, but as a wonderful gift every marriage needs*
 - *“We need to stop listening to ourselves and start speaking to ourselves!”*
 - *p. 79-80*

B. The Daily Habits of a Confession Lifestyle

1. We will be lovingly honest
 - Matthew 18:15-17 – *the call to if you have something against your fellow believer*
 - Matthew 5:23 – *the call if your fellow believer has something against you*
 - Ephesians 4:15-16 – *the attitude when we confront – truth not spoken in love ceases to be helpful in most cases because the message gets twisted and distorted by other human emotions and agendas*
2. We will be humble when exposed
 - Proverbs 18:12 – *we must humbly quiet the inner lawyer, remember that we are still sinners, that this moment is a moment of God’s grace*
3. We will not excuse
 - *Refusing to excuse ourselves (when sin is involved) means resisting the arguments for our righteousness – sometimes there is true misunderstanding*
4. We will be quick to admit wrongs
 - Ephesians 4:26 – *do not let the sun go down on your wrath*
 - *What happens if we are not quick to admit wrong? We give time for bitterness and anger to build up*
5. We will listen and examine
 - *I want to play another video that illustrates this need to listen and examine – (PP) Play “It’s Not about the Nail”*
 - Proverbs 15:31-33 – *listen to reproof! So hard!*
 - Lamentations 3:40 – *let us test and examine our ways*

6. We will greet confession with encouragement and thanksgiving
 - *We will not speak words of judgment (“It’s about time”), we will not speak with self-righteousness, nor will we seek to increase guilt and shame*
 - *Responding with judgment will discourage further confession*
7. We will be patient, persevering and gentle in the face of wrong
 - “Change is most often a process and seldom an event”
 - It is often “inconvenient” – p. 82
8. We will not return to the past
 - 1 Corinthians 13:5 – *Love “is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.” (NIV)*
 - *Love “does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful” (ESV)*
9. We will put our hope in Christ
 - We must give up hoping in ourselves and put our hope in Christ, in his work in us

C. The Harvest of Unforgiveness

- Galatians 6:7-8 – *“whatever one sows, that will he also reap.”*
1. Immaturity and Failure – *we continue to act like children and don’t grow in the relationship*
 2. Falling into Comfortable Patterns – *we build sinful and destructive patterns of responding which over time become comfortable but do not help*
 3. Establishing Defenses – *often the best defense is an offense and so we go on the attack and reach into our arsenal of past or current wrongs*
 4. Nurturing Dislike – *if we do not deal with wrongs, we begin to focus on them, and our perspective will become increasingly negative and we will begin to interpret even benign actions through the lens of negativity*
 5. Becoming Overwhelmed – *the daily need to defend ourselves becomes very exhausting, the lack of change leads to being overwhelmed by hopelessness*
 6. Envy of Other Couples – *we look on at the airbrushed public persona of other couples and begin to think about what it might be like if I married someone like him or her – or perhaps even if I married him or her specifically*
 7. Fantasies of Escape – *unforgiveness almost always leads here – it begins with casual daydreaming when tired and overwhelmed*
 - “The road between fantasy and obsession or fantasy and resolve is not very long”

D. What Is Forgiveness?

- “Forgiveness is a vertical commitment that is followed by a horizontal transaction...Forgiveness begins by your giving your offense to the Lord.”

- *This does not mean that we pretend nothing is wrong, nor does it mean that we pretend that what was wrong was alright, it means that you do not carry the wrong with you in bitterness, nor do you treat the other in light of the wrong (judgment, vengeance)*
- You entrust yourself to God's mercy and commit yourself to mercy as well
- Romans 12:9-13 –
- *Vertical forgiveness clears your heart to approach your spouse in humility and grace, to deal with him or her in a patient, kind, loving, encouraging and humble way*
- Vertical forgiveness is judicial – you are entrusting the offense to God and leaving judgment and any desire for vengeance with him.
- The second part is relational.
- “You cannot relationally forgive someone who has not asked for it” (*although you can “judicially forgive”*)
- The Biblical pattern when sinned against is either they confess and then you forgive, or you confront, they confess, and you forgive

E. When Is Forgiveness Needed?

- “The Biblical call to confession and forgiveness is to be followed only in instances when one spouse has done something to the other that the Bible calls sin.”
- We must consider if we have truly been sinned against!

F. What Forgiveness Requires

1. Forgiveness requires humility.
2. Forgiveness requires compassion – *being moved by the plight of another, coupled with action to help*
3. Forgiveness requires trust – *trust that God is good even in this situation, trust that his word is true regarding his blessings and ways, trust that he is in control*
4. Forgiveness requires self-control – *again it takes self-control to hold our tongues, to not lash out, to say not to bitterness*
5. Forgiveness takes sacrifice – *it takes the sacrifice of exposing yourself, of putting others interest before our own comfort, of time and effort*
6. Forgiveness requires remembering – *our own sins and the forgiveness we have received from God*

G. What Forgiveness Returns

1. Forgiveness stimulates appreciation and affection
2. Forgiveness produces patience
3. Forgiveness is the fertile soil in which a marriage grows