

# MARRIAGE MATTERS

A CONFERENCE  
WITH JONATHAN HOLMES

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NOVEMBER 9 | 9AM - NOON  
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J.C. Ryle

Familiarity with sacred things has a dreadful tendency to make men despise them.

# Creation

*Genesis 1:26-28*: Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.

So God created man in his own image,  
in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them.

And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

# Creation

- You have a Creator: Gen. 1:26
- You are a created being: Gen. 1:26
- You are an engendered being: Gen. 1:27
- You are a sexual being: Gen. 1:28

# Creation

*Genesis 2:18-25:* Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said,

“This at last is bone of my bones  
and flesh of my flesh;  
she shall be called Woman,  
because she was taken out of Man.”

Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

# Creation

- You have a Creator: Gen. 1:26
- You are a created being: Gen. 1:26
- You are an engendered being: Gen. 1:27
- You are a sexual being: Gen. 1:28
- You are a relational being: Gen. 2:18-25

# John Walton

The word “helper” is common enough as a description of someone who comes to the aid of or provides a service for someone. It carries no implications regarding the relationship or relative status of the individuals involved. In fact, the noun form of the word found in this verse as used elsewhere refers almost exclusively to God as the One who helps his people. If we expand our investigation to verbal forms, we find a continuing predominance of God as the subject. Nothing suggests a subservient status of the one helping.



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# Fall

*Genesis 3:8–11*: And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?”

# Fall

- Relationship with God is fractured
- Relationship with each other is destroyed
- Relationship with self is damaged
- Relationship with creation is complicated

# Redemption

What or *who* can reconcile us back to God? What makes relationships really work? For that matter, what really makes marriage work?

# Redemption

Culture would say it's *compatibility*.

## *John Tierney*

“I always knew that my own requirements in a woman were perfectly reasonable—all I wanted was a nice novelist/astronaut with a background in fashion modeling.”

## *Eli Finkel*

In contrast to our predecessors, who looked to their marriage to help them survive, we look to our marriage to meet our needs for passion and intimacy and to facilitate our voyages of self-discovery and personal growth.

# Redemption

*Romans 5:1–11:* Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if 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. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.



# Consummation

*Matthew 22:23–33*: The same day Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection, and they asked him a question, saying, “Teacher, Moses said, ‘If a man dies having no children, his brother must marry the widow and raise up offspring for his brother.’ Now there were seven brothers among us. The first married and died, and having no offspring left his wife to his brother. So too the second and third, down to the seventh. After them all, the woman died. In the resurrection, therefore, of the seven, whose wife will she be? For they all had her.”

But Jesus answered them, “You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not God of the dead, but of the living.” And when the crowd heard it, they were astonished at his teaching.

# Greg Lanier

For married Christians, there is also comfort in taking seriously “till death do us part.” Marriage between one man and one woman is a beautiful gift of God, but it cannot bear the weight of serving as your ultimate end. Attempting to make it do so will lead to frustration, bitterness, and dissolution—or the idolatry of spouse- or child-worship. Such is the misstep of our age.

# Consummation

*Revelation 7:9–12:* After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.”

# Application

1. Marriage bears God's mission
2. Marriage incarnates God's love
3. Marriage transforms you into God's image

# Tim Savage

A more weighty rationale, a more transcendent vision, is required to lift husbands and wives to the heights of marital fulfillment. Only one thing qualifies: the glory of God. Here is something so powerful that it transcends the most difficult challenges of life. Here is a provision so dependable that it can lift marriages to awe-inspiring heights. Here is a beacon so intense that it can show the way out of the darkest crisis. Here is a vision so permanent that it can outlast every temporary obstacle. Here is something supernatural, something beyond what mere humans bring to a partnership. Here is the cement of marriage. Here is the rope that binds. When husbands and wives unite for the glory of God, they unite indeed.

Marriage incarnates God's love

# Ray Ortlund

The eternal love story is why God created the universe and why God gave us marriage in Eden and why couples fall in love and getting married in the world today. Every time a bride and groom stand there and take their vows, they are reenacting the biblical love story, whether they realize it or not. The son of God stepping down out of eternity, entering time, taking on flesh, pursuing and winning his bride as his very heart and body with his inmost, sincerest love so that he can fit her to be with him forever above – that dramatic super-reality is the breathtaking reason why human marriage exist.

Marriage transforms you into God's image



# Dietrich Bonhoeffer

God does not will that I should fashion the other person according to the image that seems good to me, that is, in my own image.

# Tim Keller

The essence of marriage is a sacrificial commitment to the good of the other.

# Stirring up conversation

- What did you learn about marriage in this session?

# Addressing Conflict in Marriage

# James 4:1-3

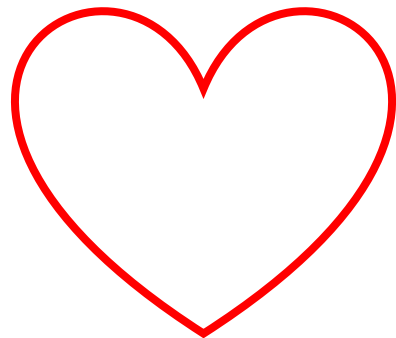
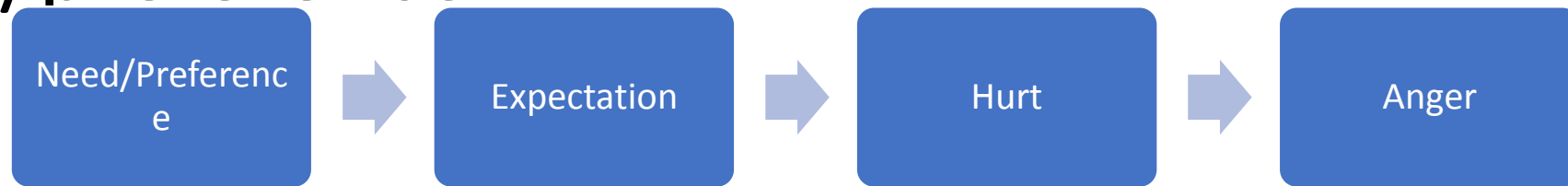
[1] What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? [2] You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. [3] You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. (ESV)

# There is a war outside because there is a war going on inside

- You desire and do not have→ so you murder
- You covet and cannot obtain→ so you fight and quarrel
- You do not have→ because you do not ask
- You ask→ do not receive
- You ask wrongly→ to spend it on your passions

# *Excursus:* Understanding Expectations

Anger can come from a **h**urt which comes from an **e**xpectation which comes from a **n**eed/preference.



**A.H.E.N.**





# Family of origin

|                               |                                 |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Small, nuclear family         | Large, extended family          |
| A family who was punctual     | A family who ran late           |
| Conflict heavy                | Suppressed conflict             |
| Dinner on the go              | Dinner with the family          |
| Clean, neat and organized     | Messy, chaotic and disorganized |
| Father was a spiritual leader | Father was absent               |
| Mother ran the home           | Mother was submissive           |

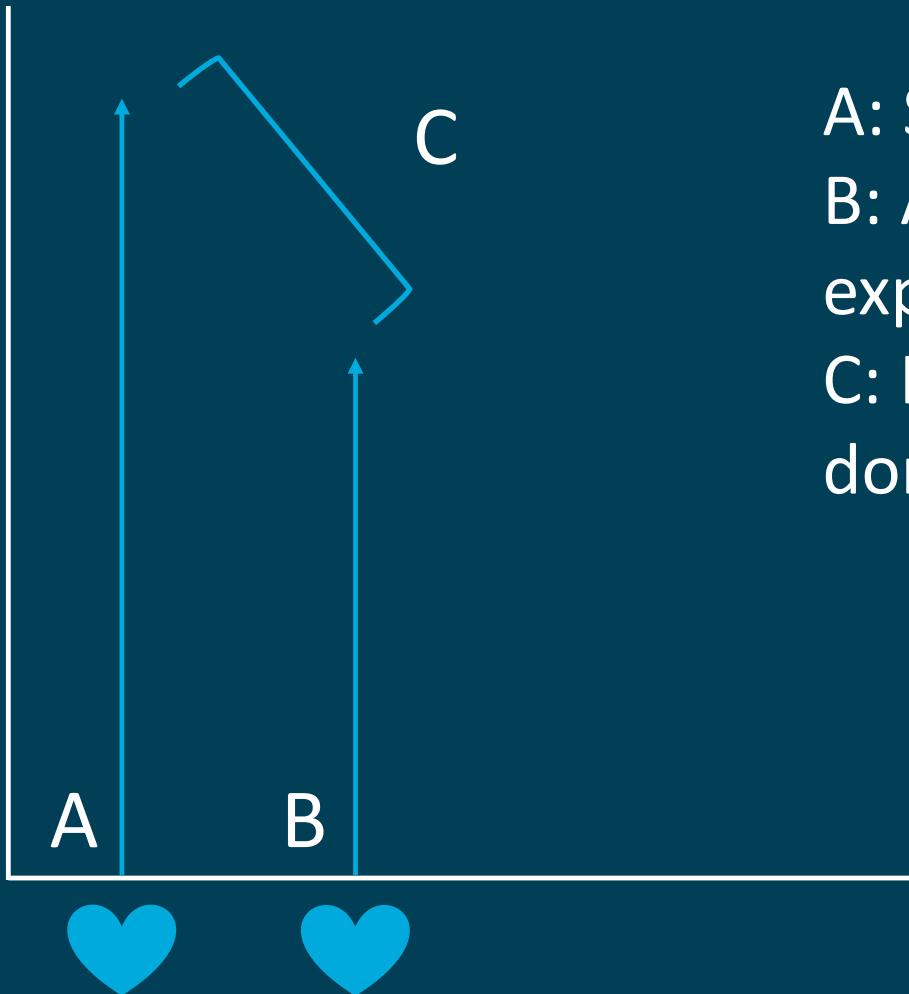
# Personality & disposition

|                             |                  |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| Introvert                   | Extrovert        |
| Timely and punctual         | Runs late        |
| Adventurous and spontaneous | Safe and routine |
| Free spirited               | Cautious         |
| Spender                     | Saver            |
| Optimistic                  | Pessimistic      |

# Like/dislikes

|               |             |
|---------------|-------------|
| Vegetarian    | Meat Lover  |
| Action movies | Rom-Coms    |
| Beaches       | Cities      |
| Fiction       | Non-Fiction |
| Pets          | No pets     |

# Expectations Diagram



A: Stated desire or expectation

B: Actual situation or realized expectation

C: How do you respond when you don't get what you want?

*BLOW UP* 🙄

*CLAM UP* 🙊

*SPEAK UP* 🗣️ 🗣️

## *Zechariah 8:16-17*

These are the things you are to do: Speak the truth to each other, and render true and sound judgment in your courts; do not plot evil against each other, and do not love to swear falsely. I hate all this,” declares the LORD.

## *Spouses can re-evaluate their expectations (A):*

- Is this expectation un-biblical? If so, it needs to be removed.
- Is this expectation a product of my own family of origin, personality/disposition, or likes/dislikes (preferences)? If so, how can I hold lightly to them, and hold tightly to God's plan- my spouse's sanctification?

## *Spouses can re-evaluate their responses (C):*

- Is my response informed by our shared context and environment?
- Is my response informed by what my spouse has gone through today?
- Is this an opportunity for me to give grace or overlook in love?
- Is my response Spirit-filled or is it my flesh demanding what I want?
- Is my response going to help us build peace or break peace?
- At the end of the day am I trying to conform my spouse into my image or into the image of Christ?

# Addressing Conflict in Marriage

- Have a plan for addressing conflict in marriage



# Addressing Conflict in Marriage

- Identify your default in conflict

- Fight
- Fake
- Flight
- Fizzle
- Forgive

# Addressing Conflict in Marriage

- Identify the real problem

# Addressing Conflict in Marriage

- Pay attention to your posture, timing, and tone

# Utilize a word bank of feelings

|               |            |           |                    |             |             |           |
|---------------|------------|-----------|--------------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|
| Angry         | Sad        | Upset     | Misunderstood      | Unloved     | Unheard     | Defensive |
| Blamed        | Cornered   | Bullied   | Taken advantage of | Controlled  | Manipulated | Disliked  |
| Unappreciated | Unaffirmed | Stupid    | Ignored            | Indifferent | Unsafe      | Tense     |
| Powerless     | Stubborn   | Exhausted | Hounded            | Foolish     | Overwhelmed | Tired     |
| Shocked       | Dismayed   | Guilty    | Embarrassed        | Ashamed     | Lonely      | Alienated |
| Remorseful    | Sorrowful  | Abandoned | Rage               | Discounted  | Frustrated  | Indignant |

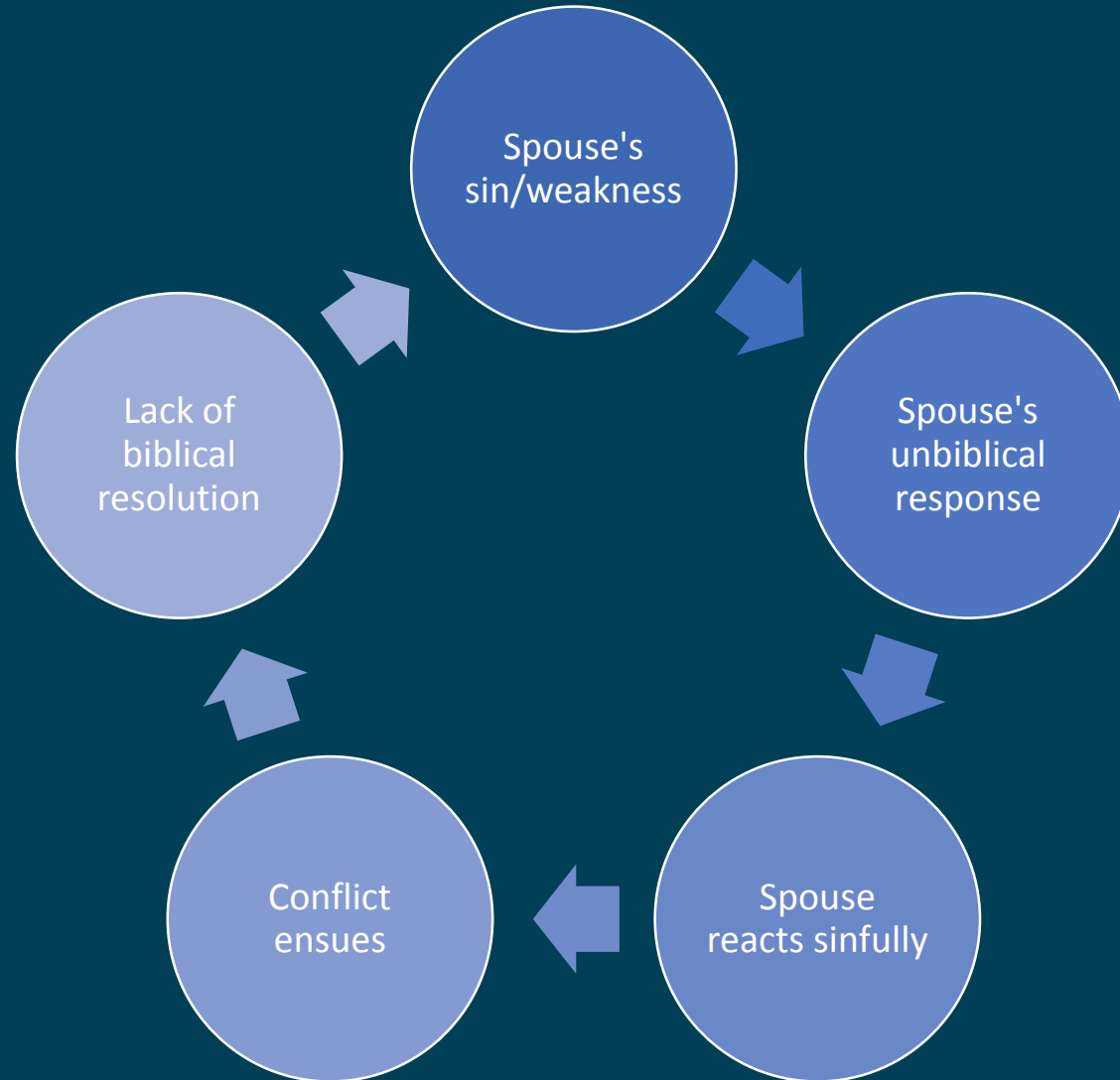
# Introduce three possibilities

1. Did I say something wrong? (content)
2. Did I do something wrong? (content)
3. Was the manner of what I said or did wrong?  
(tone/manner)

# Addressing Conflict in Marriage

- Take a look at your conflict and see if you can notice any patterns

# Take a look at your conflict



# Addressing Conflict in Marriage

- Know that there's always hope in conflict

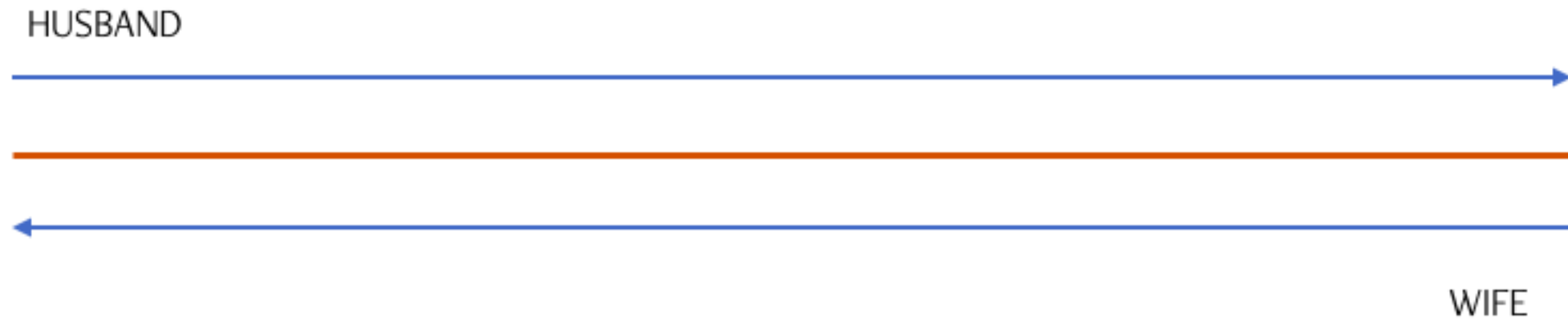


# Distinguish between compromise and consensus

Fig. 1



Fig. 2



# Stirring up conversation

- What did you learn about conflict in this session?
- What leads to most of the conflicts you see in marriage counseling. Why is that so?
- What biblical principle, story, truth can help a couple resolve and reconcile conflict?

# The Key to a Good Marriage

# Paul David Tripp

I cannot think of a more essential ingredient in marriage than forgiveness.

Tim Keller

Forgiveness is at the very heart of what it means to be a Christian.

# Walter Wangerin Jr.

When Christ is the single most solid reality upon which you stand; when in faith you find the source of your own life in him; when you yourself do dwell within his loving mercy and his forgiveness, then you are empowered to forgive your spouse, infinitely. Christ is the well from which to draw the water for your thirsty wife or husband. But this must be remembered: only as you know Jesus' limitless forgiveness for you are you able limitlessly to share forgiveness with your spouse.

# Matthew 18:21-35

# Three movements in forgiveness

- *Feels compassion: σπλαγχνισθεῖς*
- *Releases him from the debt: ἀπέλυσεν*
- *Forgives him of the debt: ἀφήκεν*



## Colossians 2:13-14

And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

# John MacArthur

This kind of behavior seems unthinkable, even bizarre, and it is hard to believe someone could act in such a way. And that is exactly the Lord's point to Peter and the other disciples. For a Christian to be unwilling to forgive one another is unthinkable and bizarre.

# John Piper

If we hold fast to an unforgiving spirit, we will not be forgiven by God. If we continue on in that way, then we will not go to heaven, because heaven is the dwelling place of forgiven people.

# Nine Common Myths about Forgiveness

1. I don't need to forgive to have a good marriage.

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# Colossians 3:13

Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

# Nine Common Myths about Forgiveness

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4. Forgiving means forgetting.



# Forgiving means forgetting

*Hebrews 10:17*: Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.

*Jeremiah 31:34b*: “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

*Isaiah 43:25*: “I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.”

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5. I need to learn to forgive myself.

# H.B. Charles

To claim that I have been forgiven by God but I cannot forgive myself betrays that I do not understand, believe, or appreciate the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a sinister attempt of the Enemy to get us to depend upon our own righteousness, rather than the grace of God.

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6. I do not need to forgive if they are not repentant.

## Luke 17:3-4

If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them. Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying 'I repent,' you must forgive them.

# Paul David Tripp

Forgiveness is a vertical commitment that is followed by a horizontal transaction.

## Mark 11:25

And when you standing praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.

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6. I do not need to forgive if they are not repentant.
7. Forgiveness is the same thing as reconciliation



# Tim Keller

Forgiveness means a willingness to try to reestablish trust, but that reestablishment is always a process.

# Proverbs 18:19a

A brother wronged is more unyielding than a fortified city...

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8. Forgiveness erases consequences.

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7. Forgiveness is the same thing as reconciliation
8. Forgiveness erases consequences.
9. Forgiveness is a feeling or should be easy.

Tim Keller

Forgiveness, then, is granted before it is felt.

# Brad Hambrick

If we demand the benefits of forgiveness before we take the risk of forgiveness, we become trapped at the crucial point.

# Cultivating a Culture of Forgiveness

1. God's forgiveness is both our motive and our model

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1. God's forgiveness is both our motive and our model
2. Know that forgiveness is costly



# Brad Hambrick

Similarly, forgiveness is a God-sized action that when written into our life pushes at the edges of our humanity to such a degree that it is sometimes deathly painful.

# Cultivating a Culture of Forgiveness

1. God's forgiveness is both our motive and our model
2. Know that forgiveness is costly
3. Make a plan

# Make a plan

- Read and pray Psalm 139:23-24
- Additional Scripture reading
- Read Tim Keller article
- Set a time for the conversation
- Make two lists
- Structure for the actual conversation

# Four Promises of Forgiveness

1. “I will not dwell on this incident.”
2. “I will not bring up this incident again and use it against you.”
3. “I will not talk to others about this incident.”
4. “I will not let this incident stand between us or hinder our personal relationship.”

*Paul Tripp*

You simply can't continually rehearse in your heart all someone's perceived wrongs against you and grow in affection toward him or her. You can't argue with yourself daily that the person you live with is the chief cause of the wrongs that you do and want to move close to them.

## *J.C. Ryle*

Do we know what it is to be of a forgiving spirit? Can we look over the injuries that we receive from time to time in this evil world? Can we pass over a transgression and pardon an offence? If not, where is our Christianity? If not, why should we wonder that our souls do not prosper? Let us resolve to amend our ways in this matter. Let us determine by God's grace to forgive, even as we hope to be forgiven. This is the nearest approach we can make to the mind of Christ Jesus. This is the character which is most suitable to a poor sinful child of Adam. God's free forgiveness of sins is our highest privilege in this world. God's free forgiveness will be our only title to eternal life in the world to come. Then let us be forgiving during the few years that we are here upon earth.

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