

Marriage on the Rock 07

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[0 : 00] Welcome to Marriage on the Rock. Here's Marv Wiseman.

I am unable to forgive, part one. Because forgiveness from God is the greatest need we all have, and forgiveness from an offended mate is our greatest need on a human relations level, it behooves us to try and cover the bases regarding forgiveness.

And while we cannot treat or even know all of the possible scenarios involving forgiveness and its need, yet more time must be logged here because of its great importance.

We have anticipated at least some of the what-if questions likely to be in the mind of many listeners, and so many of the what-if questions are different and peculiar to unusual circumstances when it comes to offenses committed and forgiveness needed.

Let's begin our question of what-ifs with this one. What if I am simply unable to forgive someone who has hurt me deeply?

[1 : 10] Here you must be careful about what you think your capabilities truly are. It may be you are trying to excuse an unwillingness to forgive by calling it an inability to forgive.

If we tell ourselves, I just simply cannot forgive him or her for what they did, then it is something over which we have no control, and we are off the hook, as it were.

After all, if I cannot, if it is simply beyond my ability, how then can I be faulted for not forgiving? Here, as is often the case in these delicate situations, we confuse our inability with our desirability. Truth be told, it may well be that we have no desire to forgive our offender, but it sounds terribly unspiritual to say, We may even be able to sell that to ourselves, but please be advised that God isn't buying it.

We have already covered the principle that forgiveness is a gift we choose to give to the repentant offender, and our choices are activated by our will. The bottom line is, we may tell ourselves or even others that we cannot forgive someone, but the naked truth may be we do not want to forgive them.

[2 : 37] With our will, we withhold forgiveness. Why would we choose to do that? Well, choose one of the following. Number one, I am too deeply hurt by what they said or did, or two, I want them to feel the pain of knowing they are not forgiven.

They made me suffer, so it's only right that they suffer too. And it serves them right to live with the discomfort of knowing I have not forgiven them, and I am not about to.

Well, if this is where you're coming from, please make it a matter of sincere prayer. Because surely, if it's an acceptable position before the Lord, He will give you a perfect peace about it, and you needn't be concerned.

But, if as we suspect, He will want you to conform your will to His will, and be willing to forgive that offender just as God has forgiven you.

Please think very seriously on this. I am unable to forgive, part two.

[3 : 49] In dealing with the complexities of forgiveness, getting it and giving it, we are posing a few of the more common what-if scenarios. And the last was, what if I am unable to forgive?

We tried to explain the fallacy of denying that we can forgive, and that we may tell ourselves that, when the truth is, we simply don't want to forgive. And this present what-if is somewhat different. What if? What if I am certain the one who offended me is not sorry or repentant at all, nor has he even asked my forgiveness? This being the case, I can't forgive, nor do I want to.

We've already discussed the necessity for the offender to repent and ask for forgiveness. And we also suggested that because the offense is a two-party transaction, that is, the offender and the offended, so also is the apology and forgiveness a two-party transaction.

It does take both to truly implement giving and getting forgiveness. The offended party cannot extend forgiveness when the offender does not even seek it.

[5 : 02] Still, the one offended must possess that disposition to forgive and be at the ready to forgive if the offender requests it. This is the only proper spiritual posture to assume if one wishes to be pleasing to the Lord.

The offended party ought always be ready to extend gracious forgiveness to all who have offended us and ask our forgiveness.

But what if we are persuaded that the offender has not truly repented of the way he or she hurt me? Well, that may be true.

But we cannot actually know that, unless, of course, the offender admits it, which is not likely, because we cannot see into the offender's heart as the Lord sees, and we have an obligation to give the benefit of any doubt.

If their repentance is insincere in seeking our forgiveness, that is to their detriment. Deceit has a way of showing itself for what it is eventually.

[6 : 10] Thus, we are obligated to take someone at his word when offering an apology, and they ask for our forgiveness. Think of how tragic it would be if their sincerity was truly in place, but because we were not sufficiently convinced, we refused them forgiveness.

In this case, we become a type of offender in ourselves, and contribute to compounding the entire affair. You can see, can you not, how operating from the flesh tends to really complicate relationships?

Nothing works like truthfulness and honesty. The Apostle Paul admonishes all believers in Ephesians 4 to speak every man truth with his neighbor, because we are members one of another. And when we speak truth to each other, we are expressing and describing reality. A lie is that which represents unreality. If someone has offended us and seeks our forgiveness with an apology that is insincere, we have no way of knowing that, and again, we must give them the benefit of the doubt. Forgiving Repeat Offenders Part 1 When the Apostle Peter asked the Lord Jesus whether it was sufficient to forgive a person who offended him seven times, the answer Christ gave must have been unsettling.

[7 : 35] He told Peter, Unto seventy times seven. Well, he wasn't telling Peter to keep count, and when he had been offended four hundred ninety times, then he could refuse to forgive.

Now, Christ was telling Peter he needs to come forth with forgiveness for as long as it's needed. And a similar scenario is described in Luke 17, where Jesus says, If your brother sins, rebuke him. And if he repents, forgive him. Also, if seven times in one day he sins against you, and seven times he comes to you and says, I repent, you are to forgive him.

It becomes obvious that forgiveness is tied to the repentance of the offender. And this requires the offender to have undergone a change of mind about his offense toward you, and to have reversed himself about it.

In doing so, he is also acknowledging he was wrong. This is a terribly bitter pill for any of us to swallow. But that's what true repentance is.

[8 : 45] If there is no repentance, forgiveness is not extended. Throughout Scripture, the formula is the same as regards God's forgiveness.

It is always contingent upon one's recognition and admission of wrong behavior and repentance regarding it. Repentance from having been wrong and coming over to what is right is coming from an untruth to truth.

God delights in this because truth is the accurate characteristic of himself. Rejection of a lie and an embrace of what is true aligns oneself with God and what he is about.

And while we should always possess an attitude of forgiveness, as mentioned in an earlier segment, actually granting forgiveness without the offender repenting, apologizing, and requesting forgiveness, our forgiveness then has no actual recipient.

It needs a place to land, and that is upon the offender. Again, it's because when the offender offends the offended, it is a two-party transaction.

[9 : 56] The party of the first part is the offender. The party of the second part is the offended. This constitutes a transaction between the two. And it takes two parties for an offense to occur.

It takes the same two parties for extending and receiving forgiveness. Neither can create the situation of offense and offended alone. And neither can unilaterally resolve it.

The apology and its attendant request for forgiveness both need to be in place to affect a true resolution. And a true resolution is what we are after.

This involves a genuine healing of the wound caused by the offender. The goal we are seeking is a full restoration which comes from a full forgiveness, which comes from a full apology, which comes from a full repentance.

Why settle for anything less? Forgiving Repeat Offenders Part 2 The subject of forgiveness extended to a repeat offender is especially troublesome and complicated.

[11 : 07] When the offending party appeals to the one he has offended and asks for their forgiveness, his apology may merely be a tool of manipulation. And by that we mean that no repentance has actually been realized.

No change of mind is in place and no genuine apology has been offered. Yet, the offending party knows he must seek forgiveness and be forgiven by the one he has offended in order to get things back to where they were before he committed the offense.

If there is no sincerity on the part of the offender, it is nothing more than crass manipulation. If the injured party grants forgiveness and tries to pick up where they left off before the offense occurred, there may well have been mixed feelings about the whole matter.

Are they right in saying, I forgive you? Or are they simply being played by the offender? Will they later regret that they forgave and kick themselves for having done so?

Yet, how can they not forgive? Difficult as it is, when they recall as a Christian how much God has forgiven them. Besides, they know that while they may have their suspicions as to the genuineness of the apology, they can't see inside the offender whether repentance is actually there and there is truthfulness in their apology.

[12 : 34] Now they are facing another plea for forgiveness and for the same thing for which they had forgiven them before, and again before that.

What's going on here? How many times are they to open themselves for another fresh wound from the offender? And then they recall the statement of Jesus and Peter about the 70 times 7 thing, and they really wish Jesus hadn't said that.

But he did. And it's clear enough, unfortunately. So what's a body to do? It looks like one is locked into the forgiveness requirement, so forgive we must.

But how can we forgive a repeat offender without doing so grudgingly? And is a grudging forgiveness true forgiveness at all? Aren't we to forgive freely?

But I feel so used, and how can I not resent and feel grudgingly about the whole matter? Well, let me insert another complicating element into this repeat offender scenario.

[13 : 43] Let's suppose the offense repeated is one of marital unfaithfulness. Is it the second time or third time that you know of? How long is this to go on?

How much unfaithfulness can a body stand or should stand? And what about divorce, or does that figure in at all? Well, it certainly may figure in, but not necessarily.

Sometimes these truly sad scenarios are cases where forgiveness is confused and mistaken for reconciliation, or restoration of the offender to the good graces of the offended.

But these, forgiveness and reconciliation, are not the same. Upcoming. Forgiving Repeat Offenders Part 3 We have earlier established the difference between a transaction of true forgiveness and the possession of a forgiving spirit.

We concluded that it is a two-way transaction when one is offended by another. There are two parties involved, the offender and the offended, and that's what makes it a transaction.

[14 : 55] The very word trans meaning to bring over from one to another. The proper resolution of the offense also requires the same two parties.

A transaction was involved with the offense, and the transaction needs to be involved in the resolution. Such would presuppose a repentance, an apology, and a request for forgiveness by the offender, for which the one offended is then positioned to grant forgiveness.

Then the matter is resolved. It took two for the offense to occur, and it takes the same two for resolution. If the offender does not repent, apologize, or ask for forgiveness, the party offended cannot resolve the transaction single-handedly.

Neither the offender nor the offended can resolve the issue unilaterally. Sometimes the one offended will say, Oh, it's okay that he doesn't repent, apologize, or ask me for forgiveness.

I forgive him anyway. But this cannot be done, because your forgiveness, no matter how eager you are to give it, has no place to go.

[16 : 07] It has no recipient upon which to be bestowed, because the offender is not involved. Herein lies the careful distinction we made earlier about possessing a forgiving spirit or attitude toward the offender.

And it's very important that we maintain a willingness to forgive, even an eagerness to do so, but only if the offender is in position to receive it.

And if they are not, have not repented, have not apologized, have not requested forgiveness, the transaction of apology and forgiveness is unable to be completed.

This complicated but necessary aspect of forgiveness is often ignored in relationships, and both the offender and the offended set themselves up for repeated offenses.

It's easy for an offender to repeat his offense when the party he offended tells him he is forgiven and pretends nothing happened. In these cases, repeat offenses are almost to be expected, because the only one suffering any real pain is the offended party, who continues on with their I forgive him anyway attitude.

[17 : 23] Such an one is a glutton for punishment, and actually contributes to the painful situation as an enabler. Human behavior operating from the flesh, as referred to earlier, may well be willing to carry on with offense after offense so long as he is free from having to suffer any consequences, while the one who is continually hurt regards it their obligation to go on forgiving and thinks they are doing God a service.

They are actually doing God a disservice, and a disservice to themselves and even to the offender. This is tough stuff. More of it's coming. Forgiving Repeat Offenders Part 4 The point just made on the preceding segment of Marriage on the Rock addressed mistaking forgiveness with reconciliation.

A true reconciliation is not possible without forgiveness, but true forgiveness may have been realized without extending to reconciliation. An extreme example of marital unfaithfulness with repeated offenses committed is, unfortunately, a reality in today's society.

It is not as common among Christians as it is among non-Christians, but it most certainly does occur among Christians, or at least professing Christians.

Is it possible for one to have been hurt, offended by one's mate with repeated instances of infidelity, each accompanied with a profuse apology and promises that it will never happen again?

[19 : 07] It's unlikely, but yes, it is possible. And forgiveness extended to a repeat offender is always in order, and such is certainly pleasing to the Lord.

But reconciliation is an entirely different matter. In fact, divorce may well be the better option in the case of the repeated offense of infidelity.

The offended one should still be forgiving, but there is no necessity to reconcile. To do so, one merely opens oneself to more offenses.

Continuing on in this situation would require living with perpetual suspicion and an unavoidable distrust. Please understand, divorce is not required, but it certainly is permitted, and with very adequate biblical grounds.

The offended party should seek competent legal advice, preferably from an attorney who is a believer, and better able to appreciate the scriptural ramifications of the situation.

[20 : 09] While the goal of offenses committed is restoration and reconciliation, such is not always possible. It would be possible, of course, and even desirable and recommended, were both parties committed to the two requirements we emphasized in the beginning sessions of Marriage on the Rock.

Remember? They were a commitment to each other at the outset of your marriage, and a recommitment to God and the principles He set forth in the Bible. A habitual repeat offender has demonstrated a complete lack of moral integrity with any so-called commitment made, and should be left to his own devices and to the divine discipline forthcoming if he is a true believer.

There are no doubt serious problems in the psyche of such an offender as the pattern tends to confirm. At least extended and serious counseling from a trained therapist familiar with these kind of situations would certainly be in order.

Usually, the greatest obstacle to this is the unwillingness of the offender to agree to such counseling. To repeat, forgiving an offender does not require reconciliation with the offender.

Such may be realized, but is certainly not required. The distinction between forgiving and reconciling must be maintained. Forgiving Repeat Offenders Part 5 We have tried to make the careful distinction between forgiving someone and reconciling with someone, and they are not the same.

[21 : 52] Full forgiveness may be in place and extended to a repeat offender, but this does not mean the one offended is obligated to reconcile, that is, to continue the relationship.

It can be, of course, salvaged and even strengthened, provided both parties, offender and offended, are sincere in making those critical commitments or recommitments insisted upon earlier.

Sincerity and genuineness in making those commitments is everything. If sincerity is in place, repentance, as we have carefully defined it, will also be sincere.

Sincere repentance leads to a change in behavior sustained over time. This is what prevents repeat offenses. Anyone can change their behavior for a short time.

But if the repentance of sin and apology to the one he offended was not real, it was merely a tool of manipulation, and the change in behavior was mere window dressing.

[22 : 58] There will be repeated offenses. True repentance is an actual change of mind, and this is what produces a change in behavior. It is not superficial, but real and deep, so that the change is permanent.

Remember, anyone can, by sheer willpower, change their behavior for a season, but their heart isn't really in it, because their change of mind was only a seeming change of mind, not a real one.

No doubt, it is accompanied with an abundance of promises, and these two are repetitious for the repeat offender. Don't be surprised if the promise includes a, This time I really mean it.

Perhaps this time it really will take hold, and they will actually make good on their, This time I really mean it. But, beware whether they are uttering a, This time, or the first time, or whether their, This time, is a pattern they are repeating.

If the latter, it is a classic motif of the repeat offender, and the repeat offender will likely continue to break your heart repeatedly. Serious thoughts should be given to, Go ahead and forgive, but forego the reconciliation.

[24 : 19] It would put space between you and the offender. And should the offender ever really see the light, and actually repent in a true way, his behavior will not only change, but will be sustained over time.

And this would in turn become apparent to all who know him, and to you as well, but at a distance. Should future circumstances merit it, and a desire for reconciliation surfaces on the part of both, the relationship may be minimally re-established with great caution, not allowing oneself to make any hasty decisions.

Change behavior over a true test period of time needs to be in place before one's comfort level and common sense level can be satisfied.

Why are these things so very complicated? Upcoming. Reconciliation remains the goal.

How is it we are speaking of forgiving, yet not reconciling? Isn't the stated goal the reconciliation, restoration, and salvaging of the marriage?

[25 : 32] Indeed it is. That's what we always aim for. Then, say you, how can you speak of not reconciling with a repeated offender?

Or if one does reconcile, it should be only after a lengthy trial period of a probation kind of affair? How are these squared? Good question.

And a very important one. While the goal of an injured relationship, especially marriage, remains as always a genuine reconciliation, it must be admitted that intended goals are not always attainable.

While there is the possibility and potential for a genuine reconciliation, there is no guarantee of such unless those two original requirements are met by both parties and in good faith.

But no one can commandeer the minds and hearts of either mate and make them meet those two requirements. One cannot make a marriage alone, and one cannot save a marriage alone.

[26 : 35] No matter how much one is willing and eager to meet the requirements of a sincere commitment to one's mate and an equally sincere commitment to God and His Word, that one cannot do that for their mate.

And if their mate is unwilling to make those commitments or makes them insincerely, the ultimate desired goal of a happy and blessed reconciliation is not possible.

The goal of reconciliation has not changed, but the negative volition of one or both parties will guarantee that no reconciliation is possible.

The injuries may also be so great and so long-standing that one or both do not even want a reconciliation. So while there is major work to be done here, it is not a lost cause, at least not as far as God is concerned.

The principles He has put in place, which we have discussed at length, still work and are still available. Only a hardened heart that Christ spoke about in Matthew 19 will prevent a Christian couple from being able to achieve a grand and lasting reconciliation.

[27 : 54] Real repentance, real apology, and a real request for forgiveness can soften a hardened heart. But if the one who needs to repent, apologize and seek forgiveness, has himself a hardened heart, none of the above will be forthcoming.

Likewise, if the one offended also suffers from a hardened heart and will not forgive, none of the good things that are possible are going to happen.

God does not overpower our volition and soften our hardened hearts against our will. Yes, reconciliation is the goal and our ideal, and we strive to achieve the ideal, but we realize hardened hearts can make it unachievable.

How about your heart? Why this is all so complicated. It does become rather perplexing, doesn't it? Isn't it difficult and confusing to try and keep all these important concepts straight in our mind? We wrestle and even agonize over these issues of forgiveness, getting it and giving it, and repentance and apology, repeat offenses, promises broken, etc.

[29 : 15] The complexities seem to take on a life of their own, and sometimes the most erudite minds are baffled by it all. And why is this? Why is it that what seems like a simple relationship between two people becomes fraught with such complications?

The answer goes right back to the first volume issued of Marriage on the Rock. Remember the time we spent on explaining the biblical concepts of walking in the Spirit as opposed to walking in the flesh?

When we function from the flesh, that is, our old Adamic nature, which we all possess, we assuredly produce the ugly works of the flesh that are described in Galatians 5.

The synonym for works of the flesh is, of course, the equally ugly little word called sin. And nothing complicates living and relationships like sin.

Sin is covered with duplicity, self-centeredness, lying, cheating, deceiving, and all else that represents untruth. This is the stuff that complicates relationships and causes so much pain and anxiety.

[30 : 34] This alone is what necessitates the need for apology and forgiveness. These tools, apology, requesting forgiveness, granting it, are often not implemented as they should be, and their neglect allows the consequences of an offense to take deep root, and the unforgiveness morphs into bitterness and further injury to the relationship.

And for some, even among Christians, this neglect has been compounded by years of disharmony between people who are supposed to be enjoying their marriage in a maximum way.

To repeat, nothing injures a relationship and complicates living like sin. And despite the fact that God's gracious provision is able to neutralize the sin factor, it will not do so unless it is implemented by the parties involved.

If they are ignorant of the powers of repentance, apology, request for forgiveness and the granting thereof, or worse yet, aware of them but refuse to implement them because of stubbornness, guess what happens?

More complications in the relationship arise and are added to the mix, and it may be a mix of long-standing. Brethren, these things ought not so to be.

[31 : 56] Life is too short and too precious to spend it in a relationship like that. And doing so, we remind you, actually squanders the great provision Christ made for all believers when He died on that cross.

It was all because of sin, yours and mine. And if you sense the need for a refresher, we would encourage you to once again listen together to Marriage on the Rock, Volume 1.

A Severe Obstacle to Reconciliation, Part 1. There is perhaps nothing that so complicates relationships of all kinds, not only husband and wife, but parents and children, neighborhoods, schools and workplaces, like the evil and incapacitating reality of addiction.

If ever there was a monster to humanity, this is it. Whether drugs, alcohol, pornography, or gambling, that perhaps constitute the Big Four, they are epidemic and devastating. Someone has quipped, The War on Drugs is Over, The Other Side Won. Many governmental agencies are surrendering the fight by making some drugs legal, and it isn't even possible to calculate the lives taken and others ruined because of one kind of addiction or another.

[33 : 24] Marriages are certainly not exempt, not even marriages between Christians. Relationships that are struggling due to an addiction have an especially difficult and complicated row to hoe.

Not only do addictions of any kind tear at the very fiber of relationships, but there is always the element of deception on the part of the addict. You simply cannot believe anything addicts tell you. In fact, the first casualty in the life of an addict is truth. They are the most prolific and perpetual liars known to man, and most of them are really good at it, creative, sometimes coupling their lives with an almost irresistible charm.

Well, what do you do if you are married to an addict? If your mate is addicted to something and is at least into the acknowledgement stage, you are a little further along than those still in the denial stage because you at least have an admitted problem to deal with.

And for some, it may take an intervention scenario provided by significant others to bring the user to admitting their problem. Competent and useful therapy by trained specialists who have heard it all is available.

[34 : 51] But, as always, the success of these programs lies mostly with the willingness of the addict to cooperate. And it's truly amazing what can be accomplished with experienced counselors and a willing subject.

But, therein lies the rub. A willing subject. Most addicts who are forced into treatment by a court, a mate, or an employer, but all the while against their will, usually gain only minimal benefit.

The key, of course, is in the addict's cooperation, which he or she may often fake. And sometimes they will cooperate with getting help or even checking into rehab just to get someone off their back or avoid going to jail.

Perhaps their mate is threatening to leave or divorce them if they don't get help. So this becomes their motivation. But if their heart isn't in it, the therapists tell us they will likely not succeed.

Remember, the forte of every addict is their uncanny ability to lie through their teeth even to people who desperately want to believe them. More upcoming.

[36 : 01] A Severe Obstacle to Reconciliation Addictions of any kind are so deadly and hard to treat because they commandeer the total person, mind and body.

An addict is struggling, as it were, under a double whammy. The mind and thinking processes are all messed up, and the physical craving of the body for the thing to which they are addicted is more than a match for even an ordinarily disciplined person.

That is, ordinarily disciplined until the addiction. This blight, called addiction, can easily reduce an exceptionally capable and responsible individual into someone hardly recognizable to people who have known him for years.

No mere human is a match for what various chemicals can do to the body and the human psyche. Parents and spouses have seen their loved ones literally destroy themselves while they can do nothing but sit idly by, wringing their hands over their powerlessness to reverse what's happening. The tears and anguish, coupled with profound frustration and anger, well up within the bosoms of all who love them and care about them. And sometimes, these loved ones become frantic over merely trying to keep the addict alive while looking for some kind of miracle to occur.

[37 : 30] And, thankfully, there are documented accounts of addicts being salvaged, even to the point of being able to help others kick a habit. Alcoholics Anonymous is replete with testimonies of miraculous interventions, but they are all too rare compared to the numbers who need such a miracle.

While it is true, there are those who can say the craving for alcohol or heroin or crack cocaine left them when they came to faith in Christ, but it doesn't always work this way, and we are at a loss to understand why it doesn't.

This is one reason we call addiction a super-severe complication. It is a condition that affects all in a similar way, yet there are, at times, dissimilarities between people in the way it affects them and other dissimilarities in their response to treatment, even when administered by competent and

experienced therapists and other medical personnel.

If your spouse is involved with an addiction, attempt to obtain treatment for them. They will not cooperate, then seek advice for yourself. This is no time to be concerned about embarrassment or negative consequences.

You already have those. Too much is at stake to allow the addiction to continue unabated, and above all, remember, their promises are worth absolutely nothing.

[39 : 05] Keep loving them, but stop believing them. Every addict rationalizes that he must lie to cover his tracks or protect his source of supply and ensure being able to use what he feels he has to have.

As far as he is concerned, his survival hangs in the balance if he doesn't have it. But you, however, know that his survival hangs in the balance if he continues to use it. Get that help.

Now. How forgiving benefits the forgiver. We tend to think that forgiving someone benefits the one on the receiving end, and it does.

It serves to balance the relational scales that the offense caused to be unbalanced by their offending words or deeds. Forgiveness balances the scales and puts the offender and the offended on an even keel.

But forgiveness is not merely one-sided. The one forgiving benefits as well as the one being forgiven. How so? Well, forgiving someone prevents their offense and the resentment it causes from germinating in our spirit and turning into bitterness.

[40 : 19] When we forgive, the basis for creating the resentment and its bitterness is gone. In a very real sense, the forgiver obtains a release as well as the one forgiven.

Our spirit cannot be held hostage to the hurt that one has inflicted upon us by their offense because it's forgiven, released, sent away, dismissed.

All this provides an internal release within ourselves and helps prevent what might be thought of as a negative clutter in our human spirit.

Hebrews 12 cautions believers that we not allow a root of bitterness to spring up within us and as a result be spiritually defiled by it.

We spoke on an earlier segment of Marriage on the Rock how we are to be forgiving simply because we each have been forgiven so much by God. How then can we possibly withhold forgiveness to those who have wronged us?

[41 : 19] And a key text is found in Ephesians 4 where the Apostle Paul tells us we are to be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another as God for Christ's sake has forgiven us.

Refusal to do so lodges the offense in our spirit where it is replayed time and again whenever something reminds us of it. And this spiritually clutters our psyche.

It produces bitterness a sourness of spirit that tends to impact our disposition. Dr. Henry Brandt a Christian clinical psychologist told of a routine he followed when a new patient came to him with a physical complaint of all sorts of aches and pains insomnia etc.

etc. He would send the patient to a medical doctor for a thorough physical exam including blood work and then after the tests were all conducted and nothing physical or organic was revealed to be wrong the patient would return to Dr. Brandt and the first question Dr. Brandt then asked was who are you mad at?

Are you nursing a grudge against someone or perhaps against several people from your past or present? And he was usually met with a denial and a shaking of the head.

[42 : 37] Yet, after only minimal probing by the good doctor it was amazing what began to surface from the mind of this one who insisted he had no grudges against anyone he was shown much to his amazement that he had gone into the grudging business and it had a powerful influence on him.

True forgiveness or possessing the spirit of forgiveness is simply the right thing to do for everybody the receiver and the forgiver.

Forgiving someone who is unavailable Sometimes we are capable of having refused forgiveness to someone when we could have granted it.

At the time perhaps forgiveness was out of the question. Maybe we were too hurt or too angry or convinced they really weren't sorry for what they did and we would have considered ourselves foolish to have forgiven them.

But people change and circumstances change as well as more maturity being realized especially spiritual maturity. We may no longer wish to maintain the unforgiveness we felt toward them when

the offense occurred.

[43 : 51] But that was years ago and truth be told we would really like to call them or go to them and let them know we no longer hold the offense against them and we do forgive them.

Maybe we should even ask their forgiveness for our not having forgiven them. But we can't do that now. They are gone. Removed from this earth.

Taken in death perhaps years ago. So there's no telling them anything now no matter how much we would like to. This is not an uncommon occurrence for someone to have these feelings toward a mother or father now deceased.

Yet there is something that can be done and may provide a real release for the one wanting to forgive. Admittedly it isn't as good as telling them personally but it can still be therapeutic.

Carefully write out in detail everything you would like to tell them if you had the chance. Leave nothing unwritten or unexpressed. Sign it and date it. Then put it in a private place for safekeeping.

[45 : 00] Put today's date on the calendar and take it out sometime later. Reread it make any changes or additions that you feel necessary and then in a brief private kind of ceremony burn it and thank the Lord it is an issue from the past that is now over.

And by the way this kind of closure with those no longer available works as well in reverse. Maybe instead of needing to forgive someone you need to apologize to someone who is deceased.

I suspect many of us may identify with this even more than the former. Some of us may have caused a lot of grief to parents or siblings years ago and we may have deep regrets that we cannot go to them and render a real apology and ask for their forgiveness.

Since they have been gone we may have done a lot of growing up and have developed a perspective we didn't have when we caused our parents so much grief. Now our perspective sadly reminds us of the perspective they had so many years ago.

What we wouldn't give to tell them how sorry we were for our attitude and actions back then. It would be so good to embrace them and thank them for all they did for us despite the sometimes unkind way we may have treated them.

[46 : 26] The aforementioned letter to provide closure works this way as well and don't you know how much they would appreciate it if they could read it?

Well you just never know. Can a warning accompany forgiveness?

It isn't hard at all to see how we could extend forgiveness to someone who has hurt us deeply with a solemn warning to never let it happen again. The inherent threat is of course I will forgive you this time but if you ever the implication is obvious if you ever do that to me again next time there will be no forgiveness.

It's tempting to put these strings or conditions on it because of the great pain their offense caused us. We don't think we could survive that kind of hurt all over again and we're certainly not willing to try and find out.

So my forgiveness this time comes with the stipulation that you will never put me through this again. Understand? tempting as this is it is not the way to go for two major reasons.

[47 : 42] Number one it flies in the face of what true forgiveness is because true forgiveness does come only with the precondition of repentance and apology.

Repentance is even a prerequisite God has in forgiving one who comes to him for his salvation. Forgiveness does have that precondition of repentance but we find no post condition regarding forgiveness that is to say I forgive you but my forgiveness is only as lasting and as good as your next offense.

Remember the blanket forgiveness we examined in an earlier segment? In Christ we are forgiven all trespasses according to Colossians 2 fully freely forgiven forever no strings attached.

The second reason we can't forgive someone with the condition they never offend us in the same way again is because they are only human and are not in a position to give such guarantees nor should we try to hold them to that.

The most they can say upon our granting them forgiveness is that it is most definitely their intent not to hurt us again but guarantees are beyond human capability to fulfill.

[49 : 01] the guarantees are not beyond God's ability to grant and he does knowing full well he will keep them but they are not ours to give.

Please recall on segments number six and seven when we dealt with the distinction between forgiveness as a necessity and reconciliation as an option. It would be legitimate to inform the

offender whom we have forgiven that should the offense be repeated there would be no willingness to reconcile and while reconciliation is always the desire and ultimate goal it sometimes cannot be achieved when repeated offenses occur.

Forgive yes but then no reconciliation rather you go your way and I will go mine. Granted this is a last resort and undesirable compared to a joyous reconciliation but a repeat offender is no longer a candidate for that.

Again be reminded that these kind of situations are complications predictable from walking in the flesh. It can exact a heavy toll on both parties and most often it certainly does.

The joy of reconciliation we want to create two radically different scenarios for a husband and wife to enjoy the blessings of being reconciled after offenses have occurred been repented of apologized for and forgiveness requested and granted both ways.

[50 : 40] This first scene depicts a young couple of newlyweds. They have just experienced a newlywed spat that evokes some emotion and negativity. It was only a minor tiff and neither will likely even remember it a little later.

Yet both recognized the hurt feelings the silence and distancing that both felt that neither liked. And soon somebody whichever broke the ice with an apology after repenting and feeling guilty for what they said or did and the other responded in kind.

They kissed and made up and even had a laugh about how trivial it all was and both were embarrassed over a display of immaturity which both would like to have believed they had already outgrown.

The makeup was sweet with solid affirmations of each in their deep love for the other. Another tender embrace and all is well with the world again.

You gotta love it. Sweet, sincere, and just plain wonderful how they are deliriously in love. May their tribe increase.

[51 : 53] So much for scene one. It's over. As the curtain comes down, now that curtain goes up again and scene two is front and center. Couple number two are not newlyweds.

Been married 22 years with three kids. Adultery has besmirched what had been more than a score of years in faithfulness. never mind who was unfaithful to whom the damage is the same.

Trust has flown right out the window. The offended party doesn't know whether it can ever be regained or if they even want to regain it. The hurt is excruciating and quite beyond one's ability to express.

Both agree reluctantly to marriage counseling. And reluctantly because neither hold out much hope for it, changing anything and will probably open more wounds while still likely headed for divorce.

The offended party has already consulted a lawyer. But, thanks be to God, there are really significant gains made with the counseling. After the third session, both were actually looking forward to the next.

[53 : 05] Slowly, and yes, painfully, more insight was gained by both partners. Insights never imagined by either. And for the first time in months, they were actually able to go out to dinner together.

The unfaithful offender never misses an opportunity to renew expressions of regret and reaffirm how deeply the other was truly loved. Tears of repentance, apology, and forgiveness flowed from them both.

Forgiveness was not merely requested, but granted, and reconciliation was the most joyous thing they have experienced in their twenty-two years. The angels of heaven must have rejoiced as well. Nothing could be more rewarding for them, nor for the marriage counselor who led them in the way. Negative Offenses Can Become Positive, Part One Some would flatly and confidently say it cannot be done.

Never. No way! Impossible! Humanly speaking, yes, quite right. But with Marriage on the Rock, we invoke the liberty of the God factor.

[54 : 21] And with God, all things are possible. For most marriages, it is likely that the ultimate offense to be inflicted by their spouse would be adultery.

It seems to rank right up there with the serial murder in the minds of many. How could it ever be that a marriage relationship could actually be strengthened by a mate's infidelity?

That's just plain crazy, say they. And without that just mention God factor, they are probably right. But not with it.

Because if a couple can muster the common sense and implement the provisions God has made for Christians who are married, it is astounding how even the super painful, gut-wrenching, heartbreaking event of adultery can become a plus.

Yes, you heard me right, a plus. Now, no one is suggesting going out and having an affair to get this plus. But we are saying if a Christian couple will avail themselves of the provisions God has already made before they run to a lawyer, well, God honors those who honor Him.

[55 : 35] And we honor Him by believing what He has provided in His Word. Remember those seven principles? The offense, information, repentance, apology, request for forgiveness, forgiveness granted, and reconciliation.

Commitment on the part of both partners frees God to do His thing. Just stand back and watch Him work in the hearts of those committed to Him and His Word.

The positive benefit issuing forth from the negative offense and its pain constitutes a horrific experience entered into by both the offender and the offended.

He has hurt his wife in an unimaginable way, and his children also suffer loss in having to re-evaluate their estimation of their dad.

If you think that doesn't cause the offender an exquisite pain of his own, think again. Like his wife, he is hurting in a way he has never hurt before.

[56 : 39] Yet, her pain is because of him, while his pain is because of himself. Still, pain is pain, and these scenarios on the part of both rip at the heart like nothing else, maybe worse even than death itself.

And this can be death too. It can be the death of a marriage. But that all depends, as mentioned earlier, regarding the God factor, and whether they can get beyond their pain to invoke his principles.

If they can't, they likely will not survive the ordeal. But if they can, God will unquestionably stand behind his seven principles when they implement them, and a joyous reconciliation can be in their future.

negative offenses can become positive, part two. We are fully aware that resources are made available to believers the world knows not of.

Tragically, many believers know not of these resources either, and the end result of their ignorance on the part of Christians is no better than the end result the world gets, which is pretty pathetic.

[57 : 57] We speak of God's willingness and ability to take an excruciatingly painful thing, as negative as adultery, and turn it into a positive.

Because to say with God all things are possible are not just words. To the world, that's just an expression. But to the believer in Christ, it's a promise and a provision, not to be equated with just a religious cliché.

This stuff really works. But many let their pain and emotions dictate to them, so the provisions God has made are often not even implemented.

Tragic to be sure. When both partners, the offender and the offended, apply these God-given principles, God is behind them, and he specializes in bringing beauty out of ashes.

There is something about two people navigating through a really hard time together that creates a kind of spiritual and emotional bonding process. A bonding on an entirely new level.

[59 : 02] A level never realized in most marriages. Nor is it a level we want. But make no mistakes about it. When people experience a lethal threat, an unexpected kind of mutuality can be created.

Even two complete strangers who survive a life-threatening experience together tend to form a kind of bonding otherwise not possible. This is duplicated thousands of times by soldiers in combat and by policemen putting their lives on the line with and for their partner.

In combat, times spent together in a foxhole can bond like no other agent known to man. The principle is applicable when the life of a marriage is threatened, provided, provided the partners are ready to go it God's way, he with whom all things are possible.

And if and when the offender and the offended party are committed to repenting, apologizing, and forgiving in the way God has prescribed, there is no question about the result being a deepening of the bond between them.

We are not saying the process is painless. It's very painful. Yet, when both are seeking the salvaging and restoring of their marriage in the way they should, utterly amazing things can come out of an intensely painful experience.

[60 : 32] Sadly, this possibility is often short-circuited by one or both parties, and what they could have had as a trophy of God's grace is not realized.

Such either end up divorced, separated, indefinitely, or just try to tough it out in a relationship that neither enjoy. God really does specialize in bringing blessing out of adversity if we will only do it his way, and the resulting bonding comes with no regrets.

Forgiveness can prompt more offenses. Sometimes this can be a rationale for refusing to forgive someone who has wronged us. It's the fear that our forgiving an offender merely sets us up for being hurt by them all over again.

And of course, this is a possibility, but it is not at all an acceptable reason to withhold our forgiveness. Remember, we already discussed the futility, even the unreasonableness, of demanding some kind of guarantee from the offender.

We mortals are simply in no position to offer a guarantee of future behavior, and we shouldn't try to extract that from one we have forgiven. While we would certainly expect it to be their intention not to repeat a hurtful offense, an honest intention is the most we can expect.

[62 : 01] And if their apology and request for forgiveness is genuine, they should certainly have no intentions of ever repeating the offense. But a guarantee is not ours or theirs to give.

We all need to understand and be reminded of our flawed nature as fallen humans. Having been redeemed as believers and enjoying God's forgiveness through Christ does not mean we have somehow lost our ability to offend each other, sometimes deeply, and yes, sometimes the very one we have promised to love and cherish.

Let's recall the earlier concept at the beginning on Volume 1 of the Marriage on the Rock series about walking in the flesh as opposed to walking in the spirit. And if you didn't comprehend that concept and what Romans 6 teaches about it, please review Volume 1, because it is so very critical, not only in regard to marriage, but as it affects all of our relationships with whomever.

Remember the root of all the hurtful things we say and do to one another, all of them, not most of them, but all of them, stem from operating in the flesh as opposed to operating in the spirit.

Believers in the first century days of the Apostle Paul that were in the Church of Rome to which he was writing had this very same problem of fleshly behavior that we have today.

[63 : 31] It's merely proof positive that despite our technological modernity, the nature of humanity, even Christian humanity, has not changed one whit.

We can still say and do hurtful things to each other. And this, of course, sets in motion the whole dynamic also explained at the onset. Remember those seven steps?

The offense, information, repentance, apology, requesting forgiveness, receiving forgiveness, and restoration. So, while the possibility of forgiveness can generate additional offenses, it still remains the most sublime and needful gift we can give.

And remember, granting forgiveness not only frees the offender from paying an ongoing penalty for their offense, it also frees us from the terrible burden of resentment we would carry in our human spirit toward the one who hurt us.

Forgiveness is that glorious commodity that frees everyone. There are no losers in forgiveness. Everyone wins to the glory of God.

[64 : 43] Complexities of Forgiveness Can there be an occasion when one has forgiven an offender only to have regretted doing so? Could we have forgiven too quickly?

Is there some way we can retract or recall our forgiveness? Absolutely not. While it is possible we may have forgiven too quickly, or even wish we had withheld forgiveness once we have granted it, it is, as they say, a done deal.

Why is this? Well, it's due to the very nature and definition of forgiveness, remember? The thing is gone, sent away, dismissed. The possibility of your calling back from someone a forgiveness you have already granted them is not an option, nor have you any right to harbor an ongoing resentment toward them because you now regret having forgiven them.

Admittedly, this all becomes complicated and is, as we said earlier, somewhat predictable when we are dealing with the complexities of an offense, all of which stem from that old, ever-present, fleshly human nature of which we spoke in Romans 6.

Remember, the opposite concepts of walking in the flesh as opposed to the spirit. Does this mean, then, that care should be given when extending forgiveness? It certainly does.

[66 : 08] And don't forget the critical need for repentance, apology, and the request for forgiveness. These are all needed ingredients that must be a part of the whole process.

Forgiveness certainly needs to be forthcoming when these prerequisites are in place, and it should be thoughtfully and intelligently extended, not flippantly or casually.

It is not out of the question to delay forgiveness in some instances, because this could reinforce the seriousness of the offense in the mind of the offender, and allows them additional time to process and reflect upon what they did or said that offended and wounded you.

We may think of this as a period of incubation wherein the offender is required to mull over the offense and their request for your forgiveness. Much of this, of course, has to do with the gravity of the offense and whether or not it is repetitive or a first-time offense.

Now, does not all this complexity again remind us of how difficult and trying our fleshly behavior can become? As we have said before, so say we now again, nothing complicates living like sinful behavior.

[67 : 32] Nothing creates pain like sinful behavior. And nothing so pleases God like believers repenting, apologizing, requesting forgiveness, granting forgiveness, and experiencing restoration.

Perhaps nothing we can do so mimics the Almighty like our being offended by one another, and then forgiving one another, even as we ourselves have been forgiven.

If ever there is a God thing in which we can go and do likewise, this is it. Forgiveness. Still, our greatest single need from God and from each other.

Aiming for the Ideal In the preceding 139 sessions of Marriage on the Rock, we have dealt exclusively with the single reality that causes people to distance themselves from one another. Whether this emotional distancing or even physical distancing is in a friendship, a family as among parents and children, siblings, a workplace, school, or church, but especially the kind of pulling back emotionally that can occur in a marriage.

[68 : 48] It's all about relationships and the quality of them. They are so valuable because they are the very core of a satisfying and fulfilling life.

That being the case, we have thus far limited ourselves to the only thing responsible for the disruption or even destruction of relationships.

We have identified this pain-producing culprit as the offense, things we say and do to one another that drive a wedge between us.

Sometimes we are the offender, and sometimes we are the offended, and sometimes we are both, especially when a heated argument takes place and verbal blows are exchanged, and sometimes even escalating to physical blows.

The cause of the injury and its result in separation, whether emotional or physical, is always the same. It is the offenses.

[69 : 49] Offenses that hurt and anger us and result in resentment toward the offender. And while this problem called the offense never changes, neither does the remedy.

The remedy, if applied as we have described it, is the offense, information, repentance, apology, request for forgiveness, forgiveness granted, and reconciliation.

We have carefully and deliberately explained each of these seven steps toward repairing injured relationships, on whatever level they may occur, from the workplace, the neighborhood, or a marriage.

There is no question about their working. They work, and wonderfully so, because they are the biblical formula or prescription given for the cause of healing an injured relationship.

The tragedy is that they are so often not applied by the parties involved. And no, it isn't necessary that one follow to a T the outline we have presented.

[70 : 56] This outline is an expression of the ideal way it should be done. And we have sought to treat these issues in the ultimate manner for thorough resolution.

And yet, we are well aware that none of us is inclined to attain to the ultimate or ideal in our application of the principles. Still, for most of us, just getting far enough along to see the seven steps being given, a heartfelt and sincere effort, can be enough to realize immeasurable progress in any relationship that will pursue these principles when offenses occur, whether one is the offended or the offender.

We know of no other avenue for repairing an injured relationship that is pleasing to God. And this in itself should be all the motivation needed.

It is God's ideal. You've been listening to Marriage on the Rock with Marv Wysley. A preview of Volume 8.

We have devoted the first seven volumes of Marriage on the Rock toward a detailed analysis of what can go wrong with our relationships. All kinds of relationships, but especially that of marriage. [72 : 17] We track the progress all the way from the committing of the offense in word or deed, then the sequential steps in arriving at the goal and beauty of reconciliation.

We lamented the fact, and still do, that there are marvelous God-ordained principles available to all who are in Christ, but are very often not implemented or even known about so as to be implemented.

We sincerely hope these first seven volumes of 140 detailed sessions are somewhat enlightening to those who want the best for themselves and others when it comes to maximizing relationships and repairing them when needed.

Upcoming Volume 8 will address issues specifically concerning marriage. While the first seven volumes were foundational and covered several aspects of relationships in general, including marriage, the volumes following, beginning with number 8, will be limited to the marriage union. We will deal with the several differences existing between marriage as our present culture views it and marriage as the Bible presents it, as a marriage on the rock.

[73 : 33] And when you see these stark differences, it will be very easy to understand why so many today have a sad and unfulfilled marriage union.

For the serious-minded Christian marriage partner, these sessions will present the God-ordained, time-honored principles not altered by the shifting sands of the latest fads in marriage today.

Often misunderstood issues, even among Christians, such as headship, submission, egalitarianism, decision-making, finances, issues of physical intimacy, child discipline, divorce, blended families, living together without marriage, stay-at-home moms, empty nests, preparing for the senior years.

And others too numerous to mention here. My first wife Barbara and I were married almost 50 years before she passed away very suddenly with a massive cerebral hemorrhage.

My second wife, the former Marie Weinbrenner, and her husband David were married over 50 years when Dave passed away following a lengthy illness. Their passings were in 2006 and 2007, respectively.

[74 : 51] In September of 2012, Marie and I were married, and both of our first marriages were absolutely wonderful. Our second marriage is wonderful as well, only a different wonderful, but wonderful nonetheless.

Marie and I are both committed to the concept that God intended marriage to be the nearest thing to heaven that one can experience on this earth. And I suspect that most of you listening to this would have agreed with that when you were married.

But do you still? We enjoy this thing called marriage so much, we want to do all we can to help others enjoy the same. Really now, for believers who are in Christ, they need not settle for anything less.

It's all part of the redemptive package Christ has provided for those who are in Him. Join us, if you will, for what lies ahead. God bless you and thank you for listening.