

Marriage on the Rock 06

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

A Perspective of the Whole In this current CD Volume 6 of Marriage on the Rock, we intend to explore in detail the dynamics involved in maintaining or repairing the marriage relationship.

And we remind you of the seven spiritual components involved. Damage always begins with an offense or offenses, something said or done to another that wounded or hurt them.

The emotional wound may be relatively superficial or very deep and threatening to the very continuation of the relationship. The wound may be likened to the analogy we referred to earlier.

Remember, the dart, the arrow, and the spear, well, whichever it was or whichever they were, constitutes the first of the seven elements in a relationship.

[1 : 01] Number one of the seven is the offense. We are including it, not because it is a part of the remedy, but because it, as the offense, always brings forth the need for the following six that do constitute the remedy.

Without the offense or offenses committed, the remedy of the following six is unnecessary. So, the offense is number one in the dynamics of the relationship.

After all, it isn't the good aspects of a relationship that injure it, but the bad. Hence, the offense. And it is followed by number two, information.

This is nothing more than the offender replaying to himself the details of the offense he committed. He may do this on his own or be supplied with details of the offense by the one he offended or by a third party.

In any case, it is information the offender is processing, whether obtained from within his own mind, which we call internal information, or by others, which we can call external information.

[2 : 12] Now, the question becomes, what does the offender do with this information? Well, there are three possible responses. Number one, he may decide to do nothing.

He feels justified with the offense he committed and is not willing to do anything about it. This is called being unrepentant or refusing to change his mind about it.

Number two, he may table it. That is, he mauls it over mentally and replays it to himself. He is considering the possibility that he was wrong and the possibility that he was in the right.

He will decide later what he will do about it after he gives it more thought. But for now, he's undecided. Or, number three, he may recognize that he was wrong and wishes he had not said or did the offense.

His regret is real, and he no longer holds the opinion or attitude he did when he committed the offense. He changes his mind and is now repentant.

[3 : 13] It means he is acknowledging he was in the wrong and wants to make things right. This is repentance. And once in place, repentance is followed by the apology being next considered.

And it is followed by the request for forgiveness, then the granting of forgiveness by the offended party, and the desired goal of restoration is the objective of it all.

This is where we are going in the process. Come with us, please. Crafting the Apology, Part 1 We use the term crafting in regard to the apology because it needs to be constructed or carefully put together to achieve the maximum benefit.

And what is the maximum benefit of the apology? It is simply that our apology be accepted, and it results in restoration being realized, because the person we offended forgives us.

Restoration must ever be the goal, because it alone provides for a renewed and ongoing harmony for the relationship. And this critical crafting cannot begin until the offender has clearly repented with a change of mind and heart about the offense they committed.

[4 : 36] If a clear and honest repentance is lacking, then a true and sincere apology is not possible. A valid, effective apology needs the foundation of a valid repentance to build upon.

Only with a genuine repentance, that is, a true change of mind and heart about the offense, can we proceed with constructing a true apology. We see the first level of the apology to consist of an awareness that we have offended the other and an expression to them of regret or sorrow.

The second level contains a description of the offense itself, not in terms of vague generality, but a specific and detailed expression of what the offense actually was.

The third and final level contains a request for forgiveness from the offended party. Must this three-level apology be crafted as we suggested?

No. It isn't absolutely essential it be done in this fashion. No doubt one could get by with less than a carefully crafted three levels we have suggested.

[5 : 49] Yet, if we want to have the maximum impact of an apology realized, it should contain all these levels. Now let's examine them and see why each is important.

Level 1 expresses regret and sorrow regarding the offense we committed. This immediately gets the attention of the offended one. Level 2 recounts the details of our offense.

And this is important because it's the only way the offended party knows that we, the offender, understand how we have hurt them. It isn't until they know that we know how we hurt them that they can then position themselves to forgive us.

And level 3 follows with our request for their forgiveness. They will feel more inclined to extend their forgiveness and participate in restoration when all three levels of the apology are in place.

For the offender to be reluctant or even unwilling to take all these steps is understandable. Because it is humbling and no one likes that. But it is also therapeutic to the healing of the relationship, injured by the offense.

[7 : 01] This humbling is part of the price we pay for having committed the offense. It is a deserved way of punishing ourselves in the humbling. After all, our offense caused pain for the offended one.

Why should not we share the pain for what we have done with a humble apology? Crafting the Apology, Part 2 We do not believe it is possible to exaggerate the importance of a sincere apology.

Absolutely nothing but the apology has the powerful potential of healing an injured relationship caused by an offense we have committed toward another.

This is true whether the party we offended is our mate, a family member, a neighbor, or co-worker. All relationships that suffer damage are invariably caused by the same thing.

We either did something or said something that was offensive and hurtful to the other party. This resulted in a rift, an emotional distancing between the offender and the offended.

[8 : 11] It could be and should be resolved in the only right way. And this is done exclusively via the apology. We could well call the apology God's principal agent for healing injured relationships caused by the offense.

And if this be true, and we are persuaded that it is, why isn't the apology utilized more often? Why is this? It's a really good question.

Please think through this with me. And the reason why apologies are often not given will become obvious. First, there is no rationale for giving an apology unless we have come to the conclusion that we were in the wrong by what we said or did.

And it's very likely we did not believe that to be the case when we said or did it. We may have even felt justified in saying it or doing it. But now we have changed our mind.

We regret the offense and wish we hadn't offended. But we did. And we cannot undo it. Regret and remorse occupies our mind to the extent that we change our mind.

[9 : 18] This is repentance. And it always presupposes wrongdoing that needs to be changed into rightdoing. But since we cannot undo the offense or take it back, the apology is the only avenue open to us unless we take the coward's way out and try to ignore it by acting like it never happened.

This often occurs. And when it does, nothing is resolved. The hurt and emotional distance remain. And the offense is stored in the spirit of the one we offended.

Our reluctance or even refusal to render an apology is connected to our ego. We feel it is beneath us to admit our wrong and take responsibility for having offended.

It's a humbling thing to do. And we would simply prefer to save face. We all know people who have never apologized for anything to anybody. They simply will not admit their wrongdoing because they think that makes them look weak or less than what they think they are.

But actually they are self-deceived. And they further compound the offense they committed by refusing to take responsibility for it. This refusal has only one consequence. It maintains the emotional distancing caused by the offense and may even widen it, thus adding salt to the wound caused by their offense.

[10 : 43] This is the stuff that drives an emotional wedge between the offended and the offender. And this is the principal reason the apology is often not forthcoming. Recognizing this is the first step toward reversing it.

Delivering the apology, part one. Let's review where we have been in the process of restoring an injured relationship by an offense we have committed.

We did or said something that hurt or angered another. Their attitude, which may be one of coolness or avoidance of us, informs us the rift is real.

This is information. In reflecting on the details of the offense, we conclude we were really in the wrong. We reverse ourselves from thinking we were right in what we said or did to now knowing we were wrong.

This is repentance. But even if we reverse ourselves about the offense, the party we offended doesn't know that. They do not have the benefit of knowing we have changed our mind unless we tell them.

[11 : 52] And this is where the apology comes in. We are merely letting them in on our change of mind and our regret about having committed the offense. In reality, they are certainly entitled to know we have reversed ourselves because they were the one we wounded being on the receiving end of the offense.

But even though nothing else will take the place of an apology, this doesn't keep us from trying. Because in order to save face and not have to cough up an apology, we may try a substitute for an apology.

Call it trying to apologize on the cheap. Because after all, crafting an apology would cause us pain and embarrassment. You know, the ego thing.

It's an emotional cost to our ego. Who wants to eat humble pie? After all, we do have our pride. Yes, we do.

And that's a large part of our problem. So, if we don't want to employ the gold standard of an apology, what else can we do short of actually apologizing?

[13 : 03] Well, nothing that is adequate. A husband who has offended his wife may try to apologize without having to use the words. Can he apologize without actually putting it into words and asking for forgiveness?

You know, fixing it so everything is okay and back to normal? Like we said, apologize on the cheap? How about buy or something? Even if it is an expensive gift of several hundred dollars, if it will get you where you want to be without having to bruise your ego by putting it all into words, well, what's it worth to save face?

I wouldn't be any good at putting my regrets into words anyway, we say. I'd much rather just go shopping or maybe even better just leave a generous gift card on her pillow and she'll get the message that I'm sorry.

Without my even having to say it. Truth be told, she would probably rather have the money anyway, right? No. Not if we're talking about an injured relationship that needs restored.

The most meaningful and loving gift you could ever give her is that sincere apology that lets her know you really value her feelings and you do so at the extent that you will humble yourself to craft the apology she deserves.

[14 : 23] There is no easy right way out. No apology on the cheap. The very word apology means from words. Start crafting, my friend. Delivering the Apology, Part 2 Having gone through the necessary steps we have often cited previously, one would think we are mentally, emotionally, and spiritually prepared to deliver the apology we have crafted.

And in most cases, this may well be true and we need only to get on with it. Yet, this ego thing we all struggle with may not be willing to yield so quickly.

So, what could yet be lacking if we have repented, have crafted the apology, and are ready to deliver it? Yes, even with well-thought-out words that show I understand how I have hurt you by my offense.

Well, let's check our attitudes. Are we going to approach them with our apology that takes full responsibility for our offense? Or are we going to suggest that they too have some blame to share and some apologizing to do as well?

And you know, this may very well be true. It often is the case when there is a quarrel or strong disagreement. But, and this is important, our apology should not be qualified or conditional.

[15 : 57] We are not to engage in negotiating an apology. We are to take full responsibility for our contribution of the offense and not try to hold them hostage to our apology by demanding an apology from them.

If we do, we short-circuit the whole process toward restoration. We are to take full responsibility for our offense without trying to make them take responsibility for theirs.

Their responsibility is between them and the Lord, and He is quite capable of conveying to them what they need to know. Additionally, we do not qualify our apology with blame-sharing or shifting.

This too is merely an effort to reduce the bruising of our ego that we would undergo by taking full responsibility. It plays out like this.

Okay, okay. I guess I should not have said what I did or have done what I did. And I wouldn't have if you hadn't done what you did.

[17 : 09] In other words, it's really all your fault. You made me say or do what I did. You see, this is a cute little game that wants to share the guilt.

But once again, it is not our call to assign guilt and responsibility to the offended party. We are only responsible for ourself, and a true apology emphasizes this reality.

Delivering the apology while demanding nothing from the offended party may or may not induce them to apologize as well, or such may be forthcoming later.

In any case, we are not to make demands or conditions when delivering a sincere apology to one we have offended. While we are responsible for our offense, we are not responsible for any part they may have had, nor should we attempt to demand anything from them, including their forgiveness.

More about that, upcoming. An Apology is Not for the Week The movie actor John Wayne was a favorite of millions of Americans for several decades, especially among the male population who idolized Wayne as a man's man.

[18 : 32] He was tough but fair, and heroic to a fault. But one wonders how many men and boys were sadly misled by our idol, with the part he played in one of his many westerns.

It was called She Wore a Yellow Ribbon, and Wayne, being a career and long-time cavalry officer, he often had subordinates reporting to him in various situations.

He had established a noble military career of unselfish service to his country, and was looking forward to retirement, justly deserved. However, a curt phrase used by Wayne on multiple occasions was truly regrettable.

The line John Wayne delivered was, With a curt, never apologize. It's a sign of weakness. Upon hearing our rugged, manly hero utter those words, I winced with regret, wondering, just how many men and boys watching their favorite actor would actually believe that?

If ever there was a line in a movie script for which the Duke should have requested a rewrite, that was it. Because the message he conveyed in saying an apology is a sign of weakness is that men of strength do not apologize.

[19 : 50] Only weak men do that. It's tragic. Even more tragic is that many men who idolize the Duke, especially younger men, really believe what he said.

Could it be that some even carry that philosophy into their own relationships, especially that of marriage? I'm afraid so. It's a popular attitude among men.

And we don't even have to get it from the Duke. We're born with it. It's bred into our ego. Oh, sure, the ladies have an ego also. But nothing can compare to the male ego, especially when it comes to protecting it.

Truth be told, our movie idol had it all wrong. Dead wrong. A sincere apology is not a sign of weakness. It's a sign of unusual strength.

It is weak men who never apologize. It's so easy and may even seem logical, at least on the surface, to confuse physical strength and daring with moral strength of character.

[20 : 54] But they are not nearly the same. In fact, one may be a 220-pound, six-foot physical specimen, playing linebacker in the NFL, bench presses 300 pounds, leads the league in quarterback sacks and running back tackles, and yet, with all of his physical prowess, he may be a 98-pound weakling in moral and character strength.

These are the areas of strength that determines the character of one's relationships. Taking responsibility for what one says and does in offending others by being big enough and strong enough to render a sincere apology to the offended party requires strength that all too few people possess.

But those who do will discover that an apology helps heal a wounded relationship like nothing else. Another cheap apology to avoid.

Everybody loves a bargain. Nothing gets our attention when we're shopping like the sign that says, Half Price or Drastically Reduced.

And when we need to apologize and seek the forgiveness of someone we offended, it's a costly thing to do. The cost is to our ego and personal pride.

[22 : 21] Apologizing is a high-priced emotional expense we don't want to pay. Isn't there a shelf filled someplace with half-price apologies?

You know, being able to apologize for only half the price? Sure there are. Lots of them. We've already discussed buying her off.

Rather than go through the humiliation of admitting we were out of line, crawling and eating crow, I'll just buy her something nice and let that be a substitute for an apology.

She'll get the point, and the fall will begin. It'll just be my unspoken apology, and then she can grant me an unspoken forgiveness, and all will be well.

Well, we've described that as the coward's way out, and it is. It is a half-hearted apology, whereby we as the offender are far more concerned about our precious ego than we are about the feelings of the one we hurt.

[23 : 26] This should definitely be avoided and dismissed as unacceptable. Go ahead. Eat your crow and humble pie. After all, you have it coming, and doing so will strengthen your character and elevate you in the eyes of the one you offended.

Not only that, but it will also help prevent you from committing like offenses in the future, when we have to pay the price of humbling ourself. It may be damaging to our ego, which usually needs damaged anyway, but it is a boon to your spiritual growth and development.

Another apology on the cheap to avoid is the ploy of saying one word and offering it as a one-size-fits-all.

The word is, sorry. It's as if uttering this one word is a magical cure-all. If the offended responds with, what do you mean?

What are you sorry for? Inevitably, our response will be, you know. Well, this is just another cop-out and a drastically reduced price we are trying to pay in salvaging more of our pride.

[24 : 42] The apology needs to stipulate, identify, describe that for which we are apologizing. This is the only way the offended party can tell that we know exactly how we have hurt them, and we are not sparing our pride to admit it.

Now, this is admittedly a tall order, and it's precisely why many never do it, especially men, got to protect that ego at all costs.

If this is all our apology is, then don't expect it to yield the results of a wholehearted forgiveness and restoration, because it likely will not happen. Why should a half-hearted apology receive a wholehearted forgiveness?

Why should a half-hearted apology requesting forgiveness? After having crafted our apology, complete with the assurance that we know and understand how we offended them, and how we hurt or angered them in the process, we have checked our attitude, and we have delivered our apology to the one we offended.

Next comes the request for their forgiveness. This, too, can be a struggle for the offender, again, because of that ever-present ego we all have.

[26 : 03] To ask the offended party for their forgiveness means we surrender control of the situation to them. This is especially difficult if one is a superior, requesting forgiveness from a subordinate, as in a workplace situation.

Most, in a position of authority, would not want to condescend to an underling by asking for their forgiveness. It's like relinquishing control and putting the subordinate in charge.

And, our pride simply does not want to be beholden to one over whom we have authority. It is bruising, deflating to our ego, and we may think it makes us look weak and dependent.

We all much prefer the image of being in control, self-assured, and confident. And that simply goes right out the window when we have to ask someone for their forgiveness or a wrong we have done them.

And this, by the way, is a main reason many never do ask for anyone's forgiveness for anything. But, while they would view doing so as weakness, it is, in reality, a demonstration of strength.

[27 : 22] Weak people do not have the strength of character to apologize or ask forgiveness from anyone for anything. Now, in assuming you do have this strength of character, you have apologized and have asked for their forgiveness, now it's their turn to grant you forgiveness so that restoration can occur and things get back to where they should be, right?

Ideally, yes. But, the forgiveness we request may not be forthcoming, at least immediately. Why is this?

Because the offended party is in the driver's seat, remember? They are now in control. It's entirely their decision whether they will forgive or not.

And why is this? It is because forgiveness is a gift, and it is the prerogative of the offended party as to whether or not they will give this gift.

Remember, it is theirs to give, it is not yours to demand. But, say you, aren't they supposed to forgive? Yes, they are.

[28 : 33] But the decision to do so is still theirs, not yours. If your repentance is real, and you have crafted a sincere apology while asking for their forgiveness, the likelihood of their granting your request for forgiveness is much greater, but it is still their decision to make.

Your apology, sincerely delivered, and a humble attitude that accompanies your request for their forgiveness, is an enormous aid in helping them to grant your request forgiveness.

Introducing and exploring forgiveness. The goal of every damaged relationship is restoration. This is especially vital in the marriage union.

Restoration brings the injured relationship back to where it was before the offense that hurt the relationship even occurred. It may, in fact, even make the connection between husband and wife better than before.

If the repentance is done right, and the apology is done right, and the request for forgiveness is done right, it is not unusual for the couple to become even closer.

[29 : 53] What do we mean by done right? We mean that these ingredients, repentance, apology, and request for forgiveness, are all accomplished in sincerity.

All are genuine and not merely manipulative. Only if one's heart is in the repentance, apology, and request for forgiveness is it actually worth anything.

So there is no room here for duplicity or faking it, not if you are seeking a restoration that's worth anything. Truth and honesty must prevail, or it's merely playing games, and any restoration realized will be superficial at best.

Ephesians 4.25 reminds us to lay aside falsehood and speak truth each one of you with his neighbor. If we are to be a truth-speaking person with a neighbor, surely we can do no less with one to whom we are married.

The restored relationship, if achieved, will follow the granting of forgiveness to the offender requesting it. This forgiveness and what it entails is grand and glorious beyond description or comparison.

[31 : 13] It is the final thing to be realized in what may well have been a very painful experience, not only to the one who suffered the injury of the offense, but also to the offender.

But when forgiveness is requested and granted, and all that remains is the warm, loving embrace of reconciliation, all because forgiveness is in place.

Forgiveness is such a monumental element. It deserves dissecting. It is too important a feature and too little understood to merely touch on it and pass on.

Forgiveness is not only one of the greatest theological concepts found throughout Scripture, but it is intensely practical and it needs an ongoing expression in all of our lives and all our relationships so that we cannot just give it a passing or hurried treatment.

When concluding our examination of forgiveness, we will all be amazed at how much we thought we understood forgiveness and how little we actually did.

[32 : 26] To be sure, forgiveness, above all other realities, remains the greatest single need of every human being dwelling on the planet, no matter where they live, when they live, or how they live.

We will see. questions regarding forgiveness.

We have already identified forgiveness as the greatest single need of every human being. And this is not only true in our need for God's forgiveness, but also with our need on a purely human plane.

And this is because the very essence of life, its enjoyment and fulfillment is found in relationships. The connection we have not only to God in our salvation via His forgiveness, but in the connection we have to each other, especially in marriage, the most profound relationship to be experienced among us mere mortals.

The reason forgiveness is so critical is because it is the singular dynamic that repairs and reinforces relationships. And repairs are needed because offenses occur.

[33 : 44] Sometimes we are the offender, sometimes the offended. In any case, we need this wonderful spiritual elixir called forgiveness to rush to our rescue and heal the damage we do to each other through the hurtful things we may say and do, and yes, even to the person we truly love.

This being the case, and critically so, there are valid questions we should ask and attempt to answer. And let's be reminded that the pattern or basis for the very dynamic of forgiveness is rooted in God's forgiveness toward us.

And while we do not forgive to be forgiven, yet we do and are to forgive because we have been forgiven. forgiven.

We should be only too eager to spread the forgiveness around wherever needed, since we ourselves have drunk so deeply of that well. Questions include, but are not limited to, forgiveness.

How does the Bible define forgiveness? What is the basis for God's forgiveness? How long is God's forgiveness good for? Does God withdraw forgiveness He once granted?

[35 : 02] Can we truly forgive someone who refuses to ask forgiveness? What does it mean to possess a forgiving spirit? What is the biblical rationale for granting forgiveness toward one who has offended us?

And what if we refuse to forgive someone who has wronged us? Can we be certain God has forgiven us? How? What are the prerequisites that must be in place before forgiveness can occur?

These questions and others that these will generate will be treated in upcoming segments of Marriage on the Rock. The subject is so terribly important and so little understood.

It's no wonder so many relationships are in such a sorry state. Of all people who should maximize these truths and gain so much benefit from them, it is the believer in Christ.

God has gone to the extraordinary length of providing for our redemption in order to make His forgiveness of us possible. people. With it, He expects us to go and do likewise by forgiving our fellow humans in desperate need of our forgiveness.

[36 : 19] And don't we all? We shall see. The Meaning of Forgiveness Forgiveness is a principal theme found throughout both the Old and New Testaments.

And this is what we should expect, because it is, after all, the greatest need of every human being on the planet. That's right. The greatest need. More so than food or water needed to sustain our temporal bodies.

Because forgiveness is that single ingredient that provides for our eternal soul in its relationship to God. Deprivation of food and water cannot keep us alienated from God forever.

But being deprived of His forgiveness will do exactly that. Keep us deprived from the God to whom all are eventually accountable. So what precisely is this spiritual elixir called forgiveness?

What does the Bible reveal it to be? The fullest explanation and meaning of forgiveness is found in the New Testament. The original word is *aphiomi* in the Greek, and it literally means to dismiss, to release, to discharge, or to send away.

[37 : 37] It is akin to our legal term employed when one is brought up on charges before a court, and it's referred to as case dismissed, or charges are dropped.

The idea of forgiveness, both in a legal sense and in a theological sense, is that the guilty will not be made to suffer the consequences of his actions, and the guilt of the offender, is not in question, but assumed.

But forgiveness treats the offender as if he were innocent, when in actuality he is not innocent at all, but guilty. Forgiveness cannot be extended if guilt is not in place, otherwise there is nothing to forgive.

And this is the meaning of the scripture in Romans 3.23. The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Likewise, Romans 5, where imputed righteousness is described as a gift from God. This righteousness that God bestows only upon those acknowledging their guilt is a free gift and part and parcel of his forgiveness.

[38 : 52] When one we have offended chooses to forgive us for offending them, they are giving us a gift, the gift of forgiveness. Charges are dismissed.

It is the offended party alone who is in position to extend forgiveness, not the place of the offender to expect it or demand it. The offender can only request forgiveness from the party he offended.

He has no claim upon the gift, but can only humbly receive it if the offender is willing to make it a gift. So forgiveness is no small thing, but a very profound thing.

Forgiveness is the glue that allows us to have an injured or alienated relationship restored. Whether from man or God, forgiveness is the most precious commodity one can ever receive.

To cherish it is to grasp its great importance. Forgiveness is the only prescribed healer of injured relationships. The offense committed may be small or great.

[39 : 55] In either case, the only real remedy is forgiveness. God's forgiveness is our pattern.

There is an age-old saying that is wonderfully profound. To err is human, to forgive divine. Today, we might alter that a little by saying, Offending one another is a human thing, and forgiveness is a God thing.

True enough. Then there is also the modern aberration that goes something like this. To err is human, to forgive is out of the question. Often there is no thought or desire to even consider forgiveness, when the one who has been offended can only think in terms of payback, or getting even with the one who hurt them.

That is not a God thing, but the opposite. The way it's supposed to work is described in Ephesians 4. Be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.

The basis for Christians extending forgiveness to those who have offended them is in the fact that God has extended forgiveness to those who have offended Him.

[41 : 15] All Christians are recipients of God's forgiveness. This is the principal thing that makes them Christian. They enjoy the gift of God's forgiveness, extended to them as a free gift of His grace.

Apart from that, it is impossible for one to be a Christian. We who have been forgiven by God are exhorted to use that glorious reality as our pattern in being willing to forgive those who have somehow wronged us.

How can we who have been forgiven by God possibly be withholding to those in need of our forgiveness? Good question. Yet we all know we can do that very thing, can't we?

Yes, even as Christians, we can refuse to forgive someone who has wronged us. How is that possible? How can it be that one whom God is fully and freely forgiven can actually be unforgiving toward others?

Simple. We can do it as an act of our will. Just because one is a Christian, it does not mean they do not have a volition, a will, a capability to extend forgiveness or not.

[42 : 29] They will not be justified in withholding forgiveness from one who apologizes and asks for forgiveness, but they may still do it. And while the term unforgiving Christian sounds like an oxymoron, a complete contradiction of terms, we all know the woods are full of Christians who hold bitter grudges against one or more, perhaps even many people, who over the years have hurt them in some way.

They may even mentally relive the hurt in living color whenever something reminds them of it. Maybe rather often. Yes, even all the while they continue to enjoy God's forgiveness and His salvation through Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 4 well recognizes the Christian's ability to do that. And this is why the text says not to do it. We can do that. It's just that we are not following the prescribed pattern that God established by His forgiving us.

And what about the verse that says we will not be forgiven by God if we refuse to forgive others? This demands exploration and understanding. Upcoming. Do we forgive to be forgiven?

Christ spoke these simple, straightforward words in His well-known Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew 5, 6, and 7. And we read in chapter 6 immediately after the conclusion of the Lord's Prayer these words.

[44 : 00] For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.

This verse certainly is saying that forgiveness from God is conditioned upon one's forgiveness of others. Yet, as is the case with understanding any passage of Scripture, it must be interpreted in light of the time and place in which it was given.

And there are at least two important elements to factor in when arriving at the meaning of the need to be forgiving of others in order to be forgiven by God. And here they are. First, this conditional requirement was given by Christ in the context of the Law of Moses, which was in full operation during Christ's earthly ministry.

And it demanded compliance from all the people of Israel. And this was, of course, in the Old Testament Jewish setting. The Law of Moses, with all its requirements, was given solely to the nation of Israel.

And Christ functioned under this Mosaic economy and observed all the law required of every Jew, including circumcision, Sabbath keeping, animal sacrifice, and so on.

[45 : 16] These requirements were never imposed upon any other nation, but upon Israel exclusively. And this included the four Gospels, all of which, even though belonging to the New Testament in our Bibles, are filled with sayings and actions that were under, the Old Testament Mosaic economy.

Here was a conditional requirement to be met by the people of Israel under the law. And the second critical element of this command is that it was given prior to the death and resurrection of Christ.

And that changed everything. Nothing would be the same following this most momentous event the world has ever known. Because of that sacrificial death, Christ died for the sins of the entire world, a blanket of forgiveness is extended, not exclusively to Israel, as was the Law of Moses, but to all men everywhere, without exception.

Christ died for the sins of the entire world, and making everyone a candidate for salvation. And when we personalize that by a deliberate act of our will, in accepting Christ and His death on our behalf personally, we receive a kind of forgiveness not possible before the death of Christ.

This blanket forgiveness is full, free, and forever. Therefore, there are no conditions to be met for obtaining this forgiveness other than believing on the Lord Jesus Christ.

[46 : 51] This is called justification by faith, and it alone provides a forgiveness that is full, free, and forever.

Thus, man's greatest need has been greatly and graciously cared for in the death of Christ, His burial, and His resurrection.

God's Blanket of Forgiveness The previous session asked and answered the question about the need to forgive others before God would forgive us. First, we pointed out that, at one time, such was a requirement for the Jews living under the demands of the Mosaic Law.

Christ Himself recognized this necessity, and did not come to destroy that law, but to fulfill it. And this He did perfectly as an observant Jew. Secondly, the requirement for forgiveness changed dramatically after the death and resurrection of Christ.

That was not merely for Israel, but for the world in its entirety. And as a result of that substitutionary death, forgiveness from God became available to everyone, not by observing any requirements of the Mosaic Law, but simply on the basis of accepting Christ as one's personal Savior.

[48 : 15] And upon doing so, one is forgiven for all one's sins, past, present, and future. This is God's Blanket of Forgiveness, and it is all on the basis of faith alone.

The Apostle Paul spoke of this kind of forgiveness in writing to the Ephesians in chapter 1, when he said, In Christ we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us.

Essentially, the same message is given the Colossians in chapter 2, when he wrote to these former pagans, saying, You were dead in your transgressions, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, and He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees that was against us.

And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to His cross. Do you not see here the blanket of forgiveness made possible through the substitutionary death of Christ, forgiven us all our transgressions, canceling out the certificate of death?

This is a full, free, and forever forgiveness. Such was the efficacy of the death of Christ, clearly wonderful beyond words. It is the very gospel or good news Christians are commissioned to proclaim to everyone, and neither is this forgiveness dependent upon our forgiveness of anyone else, as was the case for the Jews under the Mosaic Law.

[49 : 56] This blanket forgiveness is linked to this present dispensation of the grace of God, as stipulated in Ephesians 3, when Paul wrote to the former pagans about the dispensation, or the administration, or the stewardship of the grace of God, which was entrusted to me to give to you.

Principal item of this wonderful truth that Paul dispensed, administered, or doled out to all who would receive it was the utterly astounding blanket of God's forgiveness, all because of what Christ accomplished on the cross.

He who knew no sin was made to be sin on our behalf, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. How could we possibly be made the righteousness of God?

Only by having all our trespasses freely, fully, forgiven forever. God's Blanket Forgiveness Part 2 We often simply do not understand or even dismiss what the Bible actually says about God's forgiveness and to whom this offer is extended.

It is very clearly stated in many places, among them in Romans 5, which says, Through the one man's disobedience, that's Adam, there resulted condemnation to all men.

[51 : 23] Even so, through one act of righteousness, that's Christ, there resulted justification of life to all men, and that would be the entirety of humanity.

For as through the one man's disobedience, again Adam, the many were made sinners, even so, in the same way through the obedience of the one, that's Christ, many will be made righteous.

This same glorious truth is confirmed in 2 Corinthians 5, wherein we read, For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died.

And again, God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them. John reiterates the same truth in 1 John 2, that He Himself, Christ, is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

1 Timothy 2 concurs with, One can hardly miss the message or its scope.

[52 : 42] Christ died for the sins of the entire world. He provided a corporate forgiveness for the entire guilty world. Christ delivered the entire world from Adam's transgression by providing Himself as the last Adam and is its corporate head in redemption.

So while this did not render every person saved personally, it did render every person savable. Hence, there is no one who could not come to God through Christ, because the barrier of sin imposed by Adam's transgression had been removed by Christ's death.

Therefore, says Paul, in 2 Corinthians 5, we beseech you, be reconciled to God. Paul's plea is for all to apply or personalize Christ's great sacrifice by embracing Him as their Savior.

As far as God is concerned, He has made the way of access open, because His own Son, who is now the new and living way, opened it. All are now free to come, and the only remaining barrier is that of each person's own volition or will.

We appropriate the forgiveness Christ paid for when, with our will, we make a deliberate commitment to Christ as our Savior. The blanket forgiveness provided for Adam's sin becomes personalized when we individually open our heart and mind for Christ to come in.

[54 : 20] This, then, becomes the platform or the basis of our being forgiving to one another. How We Use Our Forgiveness In addition to relishing and rejoicing in our blanket forgiveness through Christ, what other use is to be made of it?

While we do enjoy the peace forgiveness brings, the unparalleled freedom from guilt and condemnation, which we know we deserve but will never receive, because Christ took it for us, what else is to be done with this forgiveness?

We give it to others. When others have wronged us and seek our forgiveness, we eagerly and graciously give it as a gift, just the way God forgave us, as a gift of His grace.

This principle is simple and profound. Remember Ephesians 4. Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.

We are to go and do likewise. To be a Christian and have an unforgiving attitude toward others is a contradiction in terms. An unforgiving Christian is an unthinkable concept, or at least should be.

[55 : 42] But, truth be told, we do know of some Christians famous for holding grudges, refusing to grant forgiveness to one who has injured him, including perhaps even one's spouse.

What can we make of this? How can we explain that? A likely answer is that the one who is unforgiving may not actually be a recipient of God's forgiveness.

Their Christianity may merely be a profession and not a possession. Or they may lack an understanding of the great transaction Christ accomplished on that cross to provide them with their forgiveness, thus grossly devaluing the joy and blessing of their own blanket forgiveness.

This unawareness could easily contribute to their unwillingness to forgive others. They simply have little real appreciation of how greatly they have been forgiven by God.

An adequate grasp of one's own salvation should make us not only willing, but even eager to bestow forgiveness upon those who have wronged us. But having said that, it does not mean we are to be forgiving willy-nilly of anything, everyone, for whatever, in any and all cases, because there are stipulations to be considered before we extend forgiveness.

[57 : 03] And this is so with God before He grants forgiveness, and it should be so with us as well. And what are those stipulations? Well, there are but two. First, one seeking our forgiveness should be repentant.

That is, they should have regret for having wronged us, and have changed their mind about their offense to us. Secondly, they should, as a result of their repentance, ask for our forgiveness.

And you will note that these are the requirements God sets forth when He bestows forgiveness. If neither of these are forthcoming from the offender, we do not see how the transaction of forgiveness and restoration can actually take place.

And it is a transaction between the offender and the offended. But this should not lessen our willingness and even our desire to forgive, only our ability to do so, if there is no repentance and no request for forgiveness.

This is so important, we will pursue it further. Upcoming. Possessing a Forgiving Spirit
There are occasions when one who has been hurt by another's offensive behavior simply cannot forgive them.

[58 : 22] But how can that be? Aren't we as Christians always supposed to forgive anyone for anything, regardless? No, we are not. And in fact, we cannot.

Forgiveness cannot always be granted unless the conditions are met. What we can do is possess a forgiving spirit. By that is meant we should have an attitude of willingness, perhaps even a deep desire, to forgive one who has wronged us.

We may even yearn to forgive them and agonize over our care and concern for them, as a parent might over a wayward child who has deeply offended and hurt them.

Yet, in your heart of hearts, although you would love to forgive them, the opportunity to do so is not there. Why is this? It's because the offender has not met the conditions that must be in place for forgiveness to be granted and the goal of restoration to be realized.

What are those conditions? There are only two, but they are essential. First, the offender must meet the condition of repentance. That is, one who offended you must have changed their mind regarding the offense they committed against you.

[59 : 37] True forgiveness is not possible if true repentance is not in place. Second, forgiveness cannot be granted to the offender without their requesting forgiveness. While it sounds commendable to say, well, we should forgive them anyway, whether they request it or not, I am not at all certain that can be or should be done, and here is why.

The offense that they committed against you was a transaction. It was a two-party event or incident that occurred between the offender and the offended.

Neither party can by themselves restore the injured relationship. Both principles must be involved in the process of restoration, which is always the goal.

Neither can of themselves affect that. Both must be players in the solution, because both were players in the offense that caused the rift to occur. This means the offender cannot claim forgiveness from the one he offended, and the one offended cannot bestow forgiveness to the one who offended him without their request for forgiveness.

This entire situation is a mandatory two-party system from the offense to the restoration. The offended one cannot truly forgive the offender without the offender's acknowledgement of the offense, his repentance for it, and request for forgiveness being made.

[61 : 01] This is the way it has to work if a genuine restoration is the goal between the two. Yet, even though without repentance and without a request for forgiveness, it should be the earnest desire of the offended one to possess a spirit of forgiveness.

By this it is meant that the one offended should be eager and willing to forgive if only the offender provides him the opportunity to do so. How? By his repentance and request for forgiveness.

This is the only right way to repair an injured relationship. Anything less will fall short of a full and warm restoration. Forgiving without forgetting There is an enormous difference between our forgiving someone who has offended us and forgetting the offense they committed.

The first, forgiving them, is a matter of our will. We choose to forgive them. But forgetting the offense is not something we can will to do, as in the forgiveness.

Our memory is constituted in such a way that we do not have the ability to selectively retain what we want and forget what we don't want. In fact, there is yet great mystery about the functioning of the brain and its ability to recall, and sometimes even unintentionally, events from the past.

[62 : 34] Sometimes we have difficulty remembering things we want to recall, while at other times there are things we wish we could forget, but can't. It's just part of our human complexity.

If you ever hear someone say to a person who has asked for forgiveness, Yes, I forgive you, but I will never be able to forget it. You can be certain they are extending a half-hearted forgiveness.

How so? Well, because forgiveness is a free gift we choose to give to the offender in our forgiveness. And when we assure them we will never be able to forget what they did or said to us, we actually are attempting to punish them for the offense by letting them know we will never be able to forget it, and that it's their fault that I will be experiencing the recalled pain caused by their offense every time I am reminded of it.

That is not in the spirit of true forgiveness. It's forgiveness on the cheap. It's a reminder to the offender that I will be hurt all over again every time I am reminded of what you did, and I hope that makes you feel really rotten.

This is forgiveness? Hardly. While it is true we do not have the ability to simply dismiss things at will from our memory, a good question to ask ourselves when we forgive someone is, if I could really forget what they said or did to me and how they hurt me, would I be willing to do so?

[64 : 14] And if we have to be careful how we answer that, it's because we can deceive ourselves by providing one answer to ourselves when the other answer is actually correct.

It's true enough, we can't forget. But do you want to remember the offense? Can we obtain some kind of self-pity by recalling an offense after having told the offender that we forgave him?

Well, it would surely appear to be akin to harboring a grudge about the whole affair. But if true forgiveness has been granted, the harboring of a grudge would contradict that.

If we grant a genuine forgiveness to the one who offended us, there is no room and no justification for our having a grudge against them or even to harbor negative thoughts about them.

This all flies in the face of true forgiveness. If that's the gift we actually gave them, only good and positive thoughts about them should be our reality.

[65 : 16] Brethren, let's think on these things. What Forgetting Really Means If we mere humans cannot selectively purge from our minds things we don't want to remember, how do you think it is with God?

How can he who knows everything forget anything? Part of God's job description is his omniscience. That's a big theological word that simply means to possess all knowledge.

And that, of course, must entail maintaining a memory of all things, because were God to forget or not remember anything that he earlier knew, would mean he would then know less than he did before.

But if he knows all, he is incapable of learning anything or forgetting anything. So what then does it mean when God says in Isaiah 43, I will remember their sins no more?

Well, if forgetting doesn't mean not to remember, what else could it mean? It doesn't mean God is unable to recall them as we've just noted, but it means they will never be used against you.

[66 : 32] It's like a legal term in that our sins, forgiven by God, will never be lodged against us as evidence. They are gone, dismissed, unavailable, inadmissible to the law court of heaven.

And why is this? Solely because Christ died for those sins and paid the full penalty of death that the law demanded. Hence, there is no longer any basis for a finding of guilt for the believing sinner who has trusted Christ.

That is forgiveness that is free, full, and forever. And can we not see why this is called good news? And it all came at the expense of another, even God's own dear son.

2 Corinthians 5 reminds us that he who knew no sin was made to be sin on our behalf so that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

This is such incredibly good news. We are not only to believe it to the salvation of our souls, but we are to broadcast it far and wide so that others who believe it can experience the salvation of their soul as well.

[67 : 46] And when it comes to our truly forgiving one who has wronged us, even though we, like God, simply do not forget nor can we forget the offense, yet we choose not to use that past forgiven offense against them.

This is the essence of true forgiveness. We treat the forgiven offense as non-existent. Neither will we ever bring up the offense again as a reminder of what they did to hurt us.

It's gone. Unavailable for use. So long as we bring up that past offense and throw it up to the one we have supposedly forgiven, we are simply saying we did not truly forgive them at all.

And any time we need some ammunition and are tempted to drag that once so-called forgiven offense out of the closet of our memory, we refuse to do it. We will not use it against them.

How can we? When it is to be treated as something that never even happened. And if we treat it thusly, it isn't even there to bring up and use.

[68 : 54] Case closed. Why and how Christians forgive differently.

We have already stressed the fact of forgiveness being the greatest need any and every human being has. This is especially true when we speak of forgiveness from God.

That need transcends all others. In addition, we mere mortals often need to request forgiveness not just from God, but from one another as well.

In the self-centeredness that characterizes us, we say and do things that hurt one another. Thus, we never outgrow our need for repentance and forgiveness, either getting it or giving it.

But it also needs to be acknowledged that Christians don't have a corner on forgiveness. Forgiveness is a crucial commodity that is needed and shared among all humanity, not just Christians.

[69 : 56] So, what is the principal difference between a Christian forgiving someone as opposed to a non-Christian forgiving someone? There are at least two important differences, and no doubt more could be added, but we focus upon just two.

And the first difference is that the Christian has a far greater motivation to forgive in that we have already enjoyed the all-surpassing forgiveness from God himself.

This is such a great and logical impetus for us to extend forgiveness to others. Putting it mildly, we can say it's comparatively easy for us to forgive others when we honestly reflect on how great God's forgiveness was to us.

There really isn't the slightest comparison. And any Christian who thinks others have wronged us more deeply than we have wronged God, simply doesn't understand much about the nature of their sin or of the holiness of a deeply offended God.

Hence, we can forgive out of a base of personal experience of having been forgiven, forgiven of so much more than we are asked to forgive another.

[71 : 09] And secondly, also tied to the first is the fact that while we not only have a personal base of experience, we also as a Christian have a supernatural resource in God himself to aid us in extending forgiveness to others.

God richly supplies all believers with supernatural resources to be and do all he requires of us. And that includes eagerly extending our forgiveness to those who have hurt us.

We already noted in a past segment that while we do not forgive others in order to be forgiven, we do forgive others because we have been forgiven.

We give a small gift of forgiveness to others because, comparatively speaking, we have already received a much larger gift of forgiveness from God.

And please, don't even entertain the thought for a moment that somehow your forgiveness of others equals God's forgiveness of you. It isn't even close.

[72 : 10] We might characterize the gap as infinite. Properly understanding this incalculable difference ought to make us eager to forgive and ashamed to refuse it to one who has wronged us, repented, and asked for our forgiveness.

Brethren, please think on these things. You've been listening to Marriage on the Rock. This is a preview of Marriage on the Rock upcoming disc number seven.

Being fully persuaded as to the great importance of forgiveness and the great scarcity of its being requested and granted as it should be, we are compelled to continue this crucial theme on the upcoming CD volume number seven of Marriage on the Rock.

You can anticipate these questions about forgiveness being addressed in a way we know will be far from exhaustive, but we hope will be adequate enough to be helpful and of encouragement.

Number one, what about forgiving repeat offenders? Two, how can we tell someone's repentance is genuine when they ask for our forgiveness?

[73 : 36] Number three, what if I just cannot forgive someone who asks for my forgiveness? Four, can we forgive conditionally, that is, with the stipulation that the one I am forgiving can never hurt me again?

Five, can requesting forgiveness or even granting forgiveness merely be a tool of manipulation? Six, what part does feelings have in requesting forgiveness, granting forgiveness, or in withholding forgiveness?

Seven, can we take back a forgiveness we have granted to someone? Eight, can apology and forgiveness actually strengthen a bond between the two parties?

How can this be possible? And nine, doesn't forgiving someone simply set us up for their hurting us all over again?

Now these are really legitimate, honest questions that a number of people have. These and other related issues that will arise from these are planned for consideration.

[74 : 53] And having addressed these, again, not exhaustively, but we trust sufficiently, we will then undertake our stated objective from the outset of our initial segments of Marriage on the Rock, that of the glorious, exhilarating, and nothing like it in the world, restoration, reconciliation of the relationship.

The healing. For husbands and wives, it's the warm embrace of the kiss and make-up. This is the grand reward for doing it right by making it through the offense, information, repentance, apology, asking forgiveness, and granting forgiveness.

We eagerly look forward to sharing it all with you and sincerely invite you to join us. And if you do not already have CD Volume 7 in your possession and wish to obtain it, you may write us at the address given, or telephone us at the number given, or make your request by email at the address given in the printed literature accompanying this volume.

This is Pastor Marv Wiseman thanking you so much for being a part of our ongoing spiritual family, Marriage on the Rock. of the Phoenix Guidance on the During theizing Children, 2019 Cstory, Divide, Miller, Lumet, wp-