



## FORGIVE or RETALIATE

**LIVE IN BONDAGE OR LIVE IN FREEDOM.... YOU CHOOSE!**

The key to a long-lasting marriage is “forgiveness” and lots of it. Forgiveness is a gift you give yourself. Un-forgiveness not only punishes the offender, it punishes the victim.

### 1. Forgive and be \_\_\_\_\_.

Matthew 6:14-15

<sup>14</sup> For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. <sup>15</sup> But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

### 2. Forgive \_\_\_\_\_.

Matthew 18:21-22

<sup>21</sup> Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?”

<sup>22</sup> Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

### 3. Forgive to \_\_\_\_\_.

**1 Peter 3:9** <sup>9</sup> Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

Many couples will say, “I’ve forgiven”, but you can’t see one ounce of proof in how they talk or act towards their offender. Ask this question: “What evidence is there in your heart and actions that would indicate you forgave that person?”

## **FOUR KEY WAYS TO ASSURE SOMEONE HAS FORGIVEN**

### **• IF THEY ARE KIND TO THEIR OFFENDER**

Kindness is such a vague word but is a real indicator that one has forgiven. When you mentor couples take a close look at the following behaviors and address the ones you see as an issue.

- a) Body Language: Is it kind and open to each other or cold and icy?
- b) Affection: Are they showing any signs of affection to their offender? (holding hands, hugs)
- c) Tone: Are they speaking in a tone that is friendly or is it sharp with edges?

Being kind is a sign of forgiveness, being cold, icy and distant is a form of punishment.

### **• IF THEY SERVE THEIR OFFENDER**

Serving our spouse is a great indicator that we have forgiven. Even though we will have highs and lows in marriage we are still obligated to be servants. Address their behavior if you see them struggling with the following actions.

- a) They should engage their normal duties. (ex: household, parenting, cooking, cleaning)
- b) They take steps towards each other when rounding the bases.
- c) They have a 'compromising' spirit. (not contemptuous)

Staying committed to my role as a servant is a form of forgiveness, abandoning my role out of anger is a form of punishment.

### **• IF THEY ENGAGE IN COMMUNICATION WITH THEIR OFFENDER**

Engaging in communication is an indicator that one has forgiven. However, not all communication is a sign of forgiveness. Maybe they are communicating, but only with anger and accusations. Confront them in the following areas if needed.

- a) They should be communicating every day on regular life activities.
- b) They should be 'rounding the bases' on daily needs and decisions.
- c) They should be restraining themselves from name calling, yelling, cursing and accusations.

Communicating nicely to my spouse is an indicator that I've forgiven, giving the silent treatment is a form of punishment.

### **• IF THEY NO LONGER RE-CALL THE OFFENSE**

Forgive and forget. Many couples may argue that they will forgive but NEVER forget or "the bible doesn't say to forget." How can we truly forgive if we allow our minds to re-call their offense over and over and over? The bible tells us to re-new our minds and release our offenders like Jesus released our offense from him as far as the east is from the west. That's far. Mentors should really challenge couples to STOP re-calling past offenses if they ever want to grow and live in the land of freedom.

- a) Verify they are not re-calling the offenders past sins. (if they are repentant)
- b) Ask them to forgive even if someone hasn't repented.
- c) Ask them to pray that God wouldn't allow their mind to re-call the sin over and over.

## **HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT**

When mentees struggle with forgiveness ask them to write a letter that records all the deep wounds caused by their spouse. Then ask them to add any other wounds they carried into the marriage by others. Make sure they are very detailed with their list. When done, ask them to put their letter in a sealed envelope. They are not to show it to anyone.

Each one should have their letter in a sealed envelope. Ask them to schedule a meeting somewhere meaningful. (backyard fire pit, beach, campsite, fireplace in their living room or anywhere creative) Have them get dressed up for a nice evening then go to their special place and light a fire in their fireplace, fire pit or campsite. Ask them to take their letters and place them in the fire and to physically let them fall into the fire to be destroyed. It is as if they are letting go of all the wounds written on that letter and forgiving everyone who hurt them.

### **Acts 3:19**

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.

### **Mark 11:25**

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

Finally, ask them to embrace and pray a prayer of forgiveness for all that was on that letter. Ask them to go out for a nice dinner and celebrate a new day.

## **WHAT ABOUT ABUSE OR CHRONIC SIN?**

Encourage the victim to forgive the abuser, let go of the bitterness, pray for their abuser and break away from the memory of the abuse. HOWEVER, tell them to physically remove themselves from the abuser until they prove themselves trustworthy to have an ongoing relationship and to seek counseling regarding the abuse.

## **SUMMARY**

Forgiveness is a gift we need to give to ourselves. Satan often holds us hostage with our own sin and our past. Let's start by forgiving our self and living in the land of freedom that God calls us to through the death of His son Jesus.