



Secrets to a Successful Marriage

Principle number Twenty-Two

The Law of Forgiveness

1 Corinthians 5:19,21 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

1 John 2:2 He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

You are forgiven of all your sins. God has forgiven the whole world. This is the Good News! That's what Jesus and the cross was all about. Because of what Jesus did for you, you can now have a relationship with your Heavenly Father. God has given you a choice, to accept His forgiveness and have a wonderful relationship with Him through His Holy Spirit or to reject Him and live for yourself and die in your sins. He has given you a glorious inheritance. He has given you a purpose in life. He has opened the door for you to know Him and to have His Spirit and nature in your life. All you have to do is say, yes!

God's Word is full of truths that teach us how to live a victorious life in an evil world. All of God's commandments are for your sake. God commands us to forgive so that we can live free from emotional pain, bitterness, hurt, and sorrow.

THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is a very powerful force. It saved you from your sins and washed you white as snow. It reconciled you to God. It delivered you from the power of darkness and translated you into the kingdom of God (*Colossians 1:13*). Forgiveness is the power that heals broken hearts, restores marriages, mends relationships, and frees from bitterness, revenge, and hate. Forgiveness is life. It is one of God's principles to teach people how to live victorious in an evil world. Forgiveness is for your sake. It frees you from the offense, the hurt, the pain, and the sorrow of life. Being offended, abused, mistreated, taken for granted, violated, harmed, and hurt are a part of life. Forgiveness frees us from these hurts so that we can live a victorious life.

Obedying God's word and living by His principles are a choice that we make. You don't forgive because you feel like it. You don't forgive because the person that wronged you deserves it. You forgive because you choose to. As an act of your will, you forgive. All of us have hurt

someone with our words or actions. We have all offended someone. Maybe you have not offended someone to the degree that you were hurt but you have to some degree hurt another person. The truth of the matter is when we don't forgive we are acting as a judge and in reality we only condemn ourselves.

The law of forgiveness simply says this: "When you are offended, if you will forgive, God will heal that hurt. If you do not forgive, you will become bitter."

Forgiveness is God's law to free you from offense. When someone offends you, that offense is like a seed. It was planted in your heart by someone's words or actions. If that offense is allowed to stay in your heart, it will produce death in you. That hurt will affect your thinking. It will cause your thinking to be wrong. You will not be able to see clearly. And it will reproduce itself in you. The thing you hated so much that was done to you, you end up doing, in one form or another, to someone else. It causes you to become bitter. It causes you to be judgmental and critical.

Hebrews 12:14-15 Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.

If an offense is allowed to stay in your heart, it will torment you for the rest of your life. Even after many years, the thought of the offense will cause pain in your heart. You allow that person that offended you to live with you as long as you allow the offense in your heart. The good news is you can be free from that offense. As an act of your will, you can forgive that person. When you forgive you release that sin (offense) out of your life. You become free to trust again, to love again. The moment you choose to forgive, God begins to heal you of that offense. In a marriage, offense is common ground. Understanding the law of forgiveness will save your marriage. If there is resentment in your heart toward your spouse, there is unforgiveness in your heart. If there is bitterness toward your spouse, there is unforgiveness. If there are no more feelings of romance or loyalty toward your spouse, there is probably unforgiveness in your heart. These characteristics are the fruit of unforgiveness. Anytime the devil can get you thinking on yourself, he can destroy your life and marriage. We have to lay down our lives to obey God's word and forgive. Forgiveness is the love of God, and love never fails (*1 Corinthians 13:8*). Forgiveness is for your sake. It keeps marriages alive and well. It keeps relationships strong. It is one of the greatest secrets you will ever learn. You can become very skillful at forgiving. It takes practice to perfect. All of us have plenty of opportunities to practice.

In *Matthew 18:21-35* Jesus tells a story of a man who owed the King several million dollars. The day came when the bill was due. The King called for the man and demanded he pay his debt. The man could not, so the King commanded that he and his family be sold to pay the debt. The

man fell to his knees and begged the King to be patient with him and he would pay the debt. The King had mercy on the man and forgave him the debt. This same man went and found a man that owed him several hundred dollars. He took the man by the throat and said, "Pay me the debt!" The man could not pay, he dropped to his knees and said, "Be patient with me and I will pay the debt." But he would not and had the man cast into prison until he could pay the debt. The King heard of this incident and called for this man. The man was brought before the King and the King said to him, "I forgave you a debt of millions of dollars, and you could not forgive a debt of several hundred dollars." You are a wicked man. Then the King ordered him to be cast into the prison until he should pay his debt.

This story is the telling of God's great love for you. You were born with a nature that is sinful, separated from God and no way to get to God because of the sin in your life. God had mercy on you and forgave you of your sins. He erased your debt of sin. God gave His only begotten Son to die on a cross to pay the debt for our sins. If God so loved us and forgave you, how much more should we forgive when someone sins against us.

Mark 11:25-26 And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

Out of a reverence for God, forgive others. Just as God has forgiven you, so you do also. You can be free from the pain and sorrow of offense. When you forgive those that have hurt you, you are not releasing that person of their accountability for their actions; you are simply releasing that hurt out of your life. All of us will stand before God one day and give an account for our actions and our works.

Ephesians 4:32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Colossians 3:13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

A Time to Reflect

1. Is there resentment or bitterness in your heart toward someone?
2. Are you willing to forgive them and let God heal you?
3. Ask God to show you if you need to forgive someone?
4. Have your feelings toward your spouse change for the worse?
5. Do you need to ask someone to forgive you?