

# When Sinners Say “I Do”

## Lesson 6

### 1. Mercy and our battle with self-righteousness

- Mercy is most necessary when we think we’ve been sinned against – how we respond can reveal the absence or presence of self-righteousness.

*How many have heard statements like: “I can’t believe you did that!” or “I don’t deserve this!” or “I’ve got a right to be angry!”? What is implied by these statements?*

- Self-righteousness is a sense of moral superiority that appoints us as prosecutors of other people’s sinfulness – we relate to others as if we are incapable of the sins they commit (pontificating).
- Self-righteousness begins by mentally assigning an evil motive to the crime of our defendant-spouse, and then convicting them internally without any cross examination or defense testimony.

*Based on passages such as Lk. 10:29-37 & 18:9-14, what are some outward expressions of self-righteousness (justifying ourselves)? How do these characteristics manifest themselves in marriage?*

- Some good questions to ask when struggling with self-righteousness:

*Am I self-confident that I see the supposed “facts” clearly?*

*Am I quick to assign motives when I feel I’ve been wronged?*

*Do I find it easy to build a case that makes me seem right and my spouse seem wrong?*

*Do I ask questions with built-in assumptions I believe will be proven right?*

*Am I overly concerned about who is to blame for something?*

*Am I able to dismiss questions like these as irrelevant?*

- Weaknesses in our spouse will tempt us to be self-righteous – those areas of vulnerability or susceptibility in our spouses that frustrate and annoy us.

*How do weaknesses differ from sins?*

See 2 Cor. 12:7-10 & Heb. 4:15 – seems to indicate there is a legitimate incapacity to do or experience something. Weaknesses may refer to disease, or human limitations that are the result of our physical make-up.

*What should be our attitude and response to the weaknesses of our spouse? (eg. 1 Cor. 15:10 and 1 Pt. 3:7)*

- Jesus says that mercy has a promise of reward NOT results (Lk. 6:35) – there is no promise that our enemies will be changed, but we certainly will be changed by extending mercy!

2. Forgiveness, Full & Free (Matt. 18:21-35)

- The main point of the parable: Extending true forgiveness is clear and pervasive evidence that we have been forgiven by God; the bottom line is that forgiven sinners forgive sin.
- Forbearance is the grace to overlook offenses against us for the sake of Christ; forgiveness is extended to another person whose sin can't be overlooked.

*"Let me never forget that the heinousness of sin lies not so much in the nature of the sin committed, as in the greatness of the Person sinned against."* (The Valley of Vision)

*Who do the characters of the parable represent?*

*Is it possible to truly forgive your spouse unless you grasp God's forgiveness of you?*

- The process:

*What are the steps needed to actually forgive your spouse?*

*Are there any sins against a spouse that cannot be forgiven?*

- a. Forgiveness between a husband and wife must involve 3 things: 1) The repentance & seeking forgiveness by the offender; 2) The extension of mercy by the one offended; and 3) The offended's willingness to absorb the cost of forgiving.

*What are some of the fears associated with granting forgiveness?*

*What other options does a spouse have if they choose not to forgive?*

- b. Forgiveness has three aspects to it (three-legged stool):
  - 1) Releasing from a debt they owe to you
  - 2) Promise never to revisit the offense or bring it up again
  - 3) Active pursuit of the offenders good

*"Forgiveness can be a costly activity. When you cancel a debt, it does not just simply disappear. Instead, you absorb a liability that someone else deserves to pay. Similarly, forgiveness requires that you absorb certain effects of another person's sins and you release that person from liability to punishment."* (Ken Sande, The Peacemaker, pg. 163)