

A BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE OF FORGIVENESS: A SPOUSAL OINTMENT

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ABSTRACT

An unforgiving spirit poses a serious challenge between spouses across the divide regardless of the period they have stayed together in marriage. More often intolerant vice escalates into physical, mental, and social contests. Lack of forgiveness exposes the victim to unnecessary stress which at times culminates in blood pressure or depression. Ultimately, the repercussions are so gravy ranching from low self-worthy, distorted notions of marriage relationships, isolation, violence, and relentless attitude to ever enduring rather than enjoying marriage. Yet forgiveness can transform conflicts into agents of peace and growth, (Machamire, 2013). Although much has been written on forgiveness, very little relates to spousal forgiveness in particular. Biblical principles that relate to forgiveness in general assist in crafting spousal forgiveness concept for the study. Discoveries reflect that spousal bitterness, marriage dissonance, and aberrations couples experience result from cherishing an unforgiving spirit.

Purpose: *To enhance spousal love and self-wellness in couples through forgiveness. The study draws from Biblical and theological reflections on forgiveness as a model for spousal healthier living where love, harmony, and tolerance are esteemed and celebrated. Scholarly sources have also been consulted. The study is also an attempt to explore mechanisms to enhance spousal love, respect, and harmony.*

Findings: *Forgiveness stems from the divine character of God who forgave humanity from an intrinsically motivated perspective to restore harmony and relationship with His creation. Every believer is a proponent of forgiveness and is obligated to resample their Marker and Redeemer by raising the forgiveness banner high so that love and harmony pervade the environment and lubricate relationships.*

KEYWORDS: *Marriage, Spouse Forgiveness, Aberrations, Dissonance, Resentment, Vengefulness, Love, Harmony, Wellness.*

INTRODUCTION

While in some instances couples destroy love relations by maintaining grudges in marriage and cherishing a spirit of revenge, forgiveness as an essential component in spousal dealings acts as an antithesis to marriage dissonances and helps bury past emotional hurts, builds new bridges of forbearance and love. In life, people who stay together more often step on each other's feet. Admittedly, being hurt by a person you trust, and esteem is quite excruciating and exasperating. Moreso, when that person is your spouse. Most likely it results in a change of attitude towards

the offender. Inversely, valuing relations and understanding how these networks should be unspoiled, provide an optimistic attitude through forgiveness. In as much as machines need lubrication for effective operation, likewise, forgiveness remains the fundamental ointment to ease and soothe spousal friction and corrosion.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy

Forgiveness cannot be delegated; it should be initiated by the offended part. Spouses are never exonerated from self-enslavement emerging from cherishing an intolerant attitude. Unforgiveness numbs relationships and overwhelm affection. Every spouse should treat forgiveness as a salvific issue. Those that stay together are bound to step on each other's foot. However, in as much as the ointment is essential for the efficient and effective operation of machines, forgiveness remains the fundamental ointment to ease and soothe spousal friction and corrosion. It is at the peril of one's life to neglect forgiveness.

Methodology

Archival study method. The Bible and other scholarly sources have been implored to examine the biblical forgiveness model.

Definitions of Forgiveness

Forgiveness relates to the idea of releasing an offender from guilt and restoring the personal relationship that existed before the offense, (Neufeld, 1979). It is an unmerited act of good will that does not let the injured party harbor resentment or take vengeance, (Gudmundsson, 2007). By encompassing forgiveness to the offender, the injured person is cured. Forgiveness is an intimate, mental, and emotional decision a person makes to let go of angry feelings or plans to revenge for what the culprit did to the injured one, (Gudmundsson, 2007). It is the fragrance the violet (flower) sheds on the heel that has crushed it, (Twain, 2021). Choosing to bless the offender instead of cursing him/her creates an atmosphere of peace around and inside the forgiver. This act builds relationships and promotes spousal harmony.

Principal Initiator of Forgiveness

The primary initiator of forgiveness is God, the Creator who through His divine love for humanity pardons iniquity, transgression, and sin, (Exodus 34:6). It is God's prerogative to take away guilt, lifts a censure, pardons, or forgives all kinds of wrongdoing. He casts away humanity's sins as it were into the depth of the sea, (Micah 7:19). He removes their sins as far away from them and Him as the east is from the west, (Psalm 103:12). For the Lord is good, ready to forgive and plenteous in mercy unto all of them that call upon Him, (Ps 86:6). The remedy to human conflicts is provided by God in His word, for conflicts are solved by forgiveness and reconciliation, (Bauer, 2015).

New Testament View on Forgiveness

Two key Greek words *charizomai* and *aphiemi* (Neufeld, 1979) assist in revealing the importance and intensity of forgiveness in the New Testament.

Charizomai: means to remit, forgive, pardon, to give graciously (as a favor).

Aphiemi: to cancel, to remit, to pardon. Literally to let go/ to send away. When God forgives, He does so completely and without reserve, restoring the sinner to the same state of favor he/she formally enjoyed and removing all estrangement and alienation, (Neufeld, 1979). This is what

God exhibited through Christ on the cross of Calvary giving redemption to humanity after the invasion of sin.

Favoris granted out of kindness not from merit on the part of the receiver. The fact that a Christian has been the beneficiary of a full measure of divine pardon places him/her under the strictest commitment to forgive their fellow beings. The religion of Christ entails more than the forgiveness of sin; it means taking away our sins and filling the vacuum with the Holy Spirit. It means divine illumination, rejoicing in God because the heart is emptied of self and blessed with the abiding presence of Christ, (White, 1900).

Need for Spousal Accommodation

Dispute management at times calls for spouses to accommodate and forgive each other. Unfortunately, selfishness and arrogance obstruct others from taking the reconciliation lane. Each spouse has the discretion to either revenge or forgive the other and maintain or suffocate and destroy the relationship. Although some responsibilities can be entrusted to others, forgiveness should be initiated and effected by the one who has been hurt. This is beneficial to the offended one. Failure to forgive attracts gross repercussions to the affected party. Resentment is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies (Mandela 2019).

The inability to forgive devastates the injured one more than it affects the wrongdoer. By pardoning the offender, the insulted set themselves free and retained peace of mind. They do not trade their serenity with resentment. Rather, they ignore what happens around, them but control what happens within them (Maxwell 2011). In simpler terms, it is within every individual's ability to accommodate words or engagements that build rather than those that are unhelpful. No one is capable of taking away one's inner peace unless the affected one decides to, (Takaindisa 2024), Spouses should never trade peace for hurt speech and bitterness. It calls for maturity on the part of the spouse to take responsibility for their actions and ask for genuine forgiveness. It is noble to admit one's error and apologize. But even though one fails to own up and say sorry, it is appropriate for the victim to pardon any how since it is the rapeutic to the offended. Like wise, the discretion of a person makes him/her slow to anger, and his/her glory is to overlook a transgression (Proverbs 19:11).

Choosing Forgiveness over Resentment

Choices are crucial in determining one's contentment or misery. Some people have learned that although retaliation looks attractive on the face of it, the situation leaves more pain than forgiveness does. Even as a selfish move, making the effort to forgive is more satisfying than revenging oneself. Being able to forgive is not a point of febleness as many people think. It is an enormous strength (Machamire 2013). Forgiveness sets the insulted free. It unshackles the mind and promotes cheerfulness and self-determination. Spouses are never exonerated from self-enslavment merging as a result of cherishing an intolerant attitude. Lack of forgiveness is the major reason why most people remain in bondage to the past. Those in oppression are not liberated by what others do but by what they choose to believe, confess, renounce, and forgive (Anderson 2000). There is no justification why couples should esteem amerciless spirit. This kind of defiance numbs relationships and eventually overwhelms affection. It also negatively influences one's well-being, especially the pitiless one. On the contrary, engaging in what shapes relationships tends to bring more nourishing results and promotes fitness of the body and mind

since a merry heart does good like a medicine: but a broken spirit dries the bones, (Proverbs 17:22).

Biblical Reasons Why Christians Should Forgive

The following points and verses have a universal application that also embraces every believer including spouses. A high estimation and demonstration of these fundamental truths creates a conducive environment for love, forgiveness, and peace in marriage. Moreover, this has a crucial bearing in molding characters that resemble Christ. Understanding that in Jesus Christ we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace, (Ephesians 1:7) soothes the mind and inspires every believer to herald the news in word and action.

Humanity has all been pardoned in Christ. God demonstrates His love toward us in that while we were sinners, Christ died for us, (Romans 5:8). We ought to exume new life as a new creation in Christ. If anyone is in Christ, he/she is a new creation, old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new, (2 Corinthians 5:17). As born-again believers, we have been assigned the ministry of reconciliation, (2 Corinthians 5:18). Christians have been called to intercede for their neighbors including their offenders too. As a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His special people, spouses should be eager to proclaim the praises of Him who called them out of darkness into His marvelous light, (1 Peter 2:9). It is the duty of everyone to declare the praises of Him who called us from darkness (sin) into His marvelous light.

The church of God is esteemed to bear a high standard. As the elect of God, holy and beloved, they should put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against one another; even as Christ forgave them, so they also must do, (Colosians 3:12-13). Forgiveness is an out growth of love and love fulfills the law. Believers are obliged to love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, and mind. This is the first and great commandment. The second like it is to love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets, (Matthew 22:37-40).

Biblical Principles on Forgiveness

Biblical principles shape the character of believers When these values are adhered to, Christian behavior will attest to the character of Christ the lawgiver. Forgiveness sets all the highest values of love in motion, (Gud mundsson, 2007)

1. You will be forgiven as you forgive. How one forgives others determines that individual's level of pardon to be received from Jesus Christ. "And forgive us our debts, as we forgave our debtors," (Matt 6:12). Those who have injured us deserve our sympathy and love. Keeping resentment militates against mission and fan squabbles and commotion. In as much as people do wrong and expect pardon from God, couples should learn to be tolerant and forgive other's trespassers. The mandate of forgiveness is so central to our faith that to ignore it is to ignore our very salvation (Gudmundsson 2007). Every spouse is encouraged to sincerely consider the issue of forgiveness as a salvific matter. This is also reinforced by what Jesus said again in the same chapter, that if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses, (Matthew 6:14-15). He who cannot forgive others

breaks the bridge over which he must pass, (Hebert, 2016). The inability to forgive enslaves the offended and removes all the possibilities to cross to a blissful shore.

Retaliation sounds deplorable in marriage as it strains relationships and militates against peace and unity. The principle of forgiveness sustains humanity. There is no room for retaliation. If we practice an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, soon the world will be blind and toothless, (Gandhi, 2019). What kind of a domain would that be with all blind and toothless occupants? It is consoling to appreciate that besides love, forgiveness is another world wide influence that sustains the world. The people who have been forgiven value an act of clemency very much and in turn pardon others as a clear validation of their affection for error-prone associates.

2. The prayer of an unforgiving person is unacceptable before God. If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First, be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift, (Matthew 5:23-24). Judaism stresses reconciliation between individuals. God would not accept an outward offering if one had oppressed or mistreated one's neighbor and did not make it right. In the Old Testament God accepted only sacrifices offered with a pure heart toward Him and one's neighbor, (Keener, 2014). Broken relationships can hinder our relationship with God. Challenges that crop in with a friend, neighbor, or spouse need prompt settlement.
3. Forgiveness is limitless. The issue of how many times one should forgive is expounded by Jesus Christ when He alluded to the seventy times seven concept, (Matt 18:21-22). It is not feasible for an individual to sin against the other four hundred and ninety intervals a day. This only means that forgiveness is immeasurable. Spouses should not even keep a record of how many times they pardoned each other. Rather they should keep forgiving until it becomes a habit, (Bigger, 2015). It is at the height of ingratitude to pursue the way of sin when we know their repercussions and when the Lord has served us completely from them all, (Keough, A.G. (1978). Acts of kindness should be exhibited at all times. If couples would choose to trade bitterness with grace and forgiveness, marriages would be sweeter, relationships mended, harmony restored, God's ideals prominent, and societies pleasant.

Again, if spouses would emulate Jesus Christ the author of love and forgiveness by meditating on how they were forgiven while they were pondering about their lostness, they would shed the light of forgiveness to their surroundings. Additionally, they would be representatives of a love-deficient society and set an example for meaningful living. These values would be cherished by other spouses too and peace-loving communities would be recognized.

4. Forgiveness is for everyone, not for those who deserve it only. Pardon should be offered to every offender regardless of the intensity of the grievances. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses, (Matthew 6:15). Failure to forgive others is denying our common ground as sinners in need of God's forgiveness. It is the duty of the offended to open wide the route toward reconciliation, (Hendriksen, 1977).
5. It is not difficult to forgive when there has been a confession. For instance, David's confession, "I acknowledged my sin to You and my iniquity have I not hidden. I will confess my transgressions to the Lord, and you forgave the iniquity of my sin," Psalm 32:35). However, even when the offender decides to be adamant, it is healthy for the offended just to let loose.

6. The liberty of knowing the truth. You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free, (John 8:32). It is only the truth as it is in Jesus Christ that exonerates the grieved spouse from resentment and retaliation. Knowing the truth opens the door to sympathy, empathy, and forgiveness.
7. Forgiveness can elicit healing. When Jesus saw the faith of the men who brought the paralytic, He declared the forgiveness of sin to the invalid and ultimately healed him. (Luke 5:20). Practicing forgiveness with focused attention and effort, can dissipate the grievances that sap spousal energy and spoil happiness, (Bigger, 2015). The dissimilarity between effective and declining marriages is not the non
8. existence of conflict, but the ability of the couple to acknowledge the conflict and set about resolving it, (Trotman, 2005).

What Forgiveness is Not

The points underneath spell out what forgiveness is not.

1. Forgiveness is not denying the reality of the offense.
2. Is not ignoring the offense.
3. It is not downplaying the importance of what transpired.
4. Not excusing the offender.
5. Not holding the offender hostage- one should not be a perpetual debtor.

Confrontation

The offender should be approached with a redemptive intent. This should be done with controlled emotions without agitation. Confrontation can elicit repentance. It should be remembered that forgiveness is not a once-off event but a lifetime process.

Benefits of Forgiveness

The following constitute benefits of forgiveness to spouses who champion this cause and desire for healing and restoration:

1. Realization of peace of mind. Forgiveness is curative to the one who has been pained.
2. It promotes reconciliation and healing.
3. Forgiveness buttresses unity and restoration.
4. Matrimonial longevity and contentment.
5. Approbation is assured to the one who pardons others.

Recommendations

Marriage is a gift given to spouses by God from the beginning. It is the responsibility of every spouse to cherish and promote a forgiving spirit to perpetuate love and harmony in marriage. Forgiveness is a prerequisite for pardon from God and a constant ointment to curb spousal friction, erosion, and unnecessary squabbles. Forgiveness is not an occasional act. It is a permanent attitude, (Luther, 2023). Spouses are more miserable when they withdraw forgiveness and never happier than when they forgive each other.

CONCLUSION

God initiated the vital model for forgiveness to restore humanity from perdition and destruction. Spouses who forgive each other resample their Creator in promoting love, harmony, and life. They also demonstrate to their surroundings better methods of conflict management where love and respect for human dignity are esteemed. However, the self must be subdued. The soul must submit to God before it can be renewed in knowledge and true holiness, (White, 1892). There is joy and contentment where forgiveness thrives.

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