

# Giving in Marriage and Forgiveness

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Preacher: Jason Webb

[ 0 : 00 ] This morning we're going to talk about giving in marriage and giving forgiveness.! Giving in marriage and giving in forgiveness. So, I was wondering, can you raise your hand if you've been married over 40 years?

Wow! Okay, how about 45? Okay, 50? Oh, we're down to 50. You guys are both 50? 50? Mecklings, how long have you been married? 55. 55 years. 52.

Okay, so, because Dick and Mickey are experts, senior experts in marriage, let me ask you this. Have you found that giving forgiveness and giving in marriage go together?

You never have to forgive each other? Yes. Yeah. Obviously, if you've been in any kind of relationship for any length of time, you realize that relationships and forgiveness always go together.

[ 1 : 14 ] And so, that's kind of why we're going to talk about them together. And so, we want to begin with talking about giving in marriage. Now, the main question I think that people generally, not just Christians, but just people in general, ask when they go into marriage is, not what I can give, but what can I get out of this?

What can I get out of this? If you're a man, you're probably thinking about sex. What can I get out of this? If you're a woman, maybe emotional attachment, emotional support, something like that.

What can I get out of this? Either way, the question becomes, what can I get instead of what can I give? We talked about Jesus' words.

It's more blessed to give than to receive. And those words apply in marriage. They apply especially in marriage. And so, where are marriages blessed?

Where do they flourish? Where are they joyful, satisfying, fulfilling relationships? It's when the question is, what can I give? It's when the couple are giving to each other.

[ 2 : 35 ] When it's about getting, there's just inevitable disappointment. There's inevitable separation. There's inevitable distance.

And so, when we invest our time and our money and our emotion, our sexual energy, and none of it pays off like we wanted it to, then what happens is there's just distance in marriage.

Separation and disappointment. And what tends to happen then is one of the people, or both of the people in the marriage, begin to look for a better return somewhere else.

Where can I get what I'm looking for somewhere else? Where can I find someone else who will fit my life better? And that can be another person.

That can be pornography. That can be fantasizing. Where we are looking for someone who won't demand so much of us. Who will fill me rather than drain me.

[ 3 : 43 ] And then we have all this getting, and getting, and getting, and grasping, and grasping, and grasping. And instead of filling us up, it leaves us emptier and more miserable.

But the Bible, the Gospel, Jesus himself says, What can I get? Is the wrong attitude, the wrong question.

Instead it needs to be, What can I give? And that's the way to be happy. That's the way to be blessed. So, take your Bibles and turn to Ephesians chapter 5.

Ephesians chapter 5. A very familiar passage on marriage. And as I read just a few verses, I want you to try to ask, or answer this question of, Which way is the direction going?

Is it going in the giving side, or in the getting side? What is the emphasis? So, 522. Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.

[ 4 : 54 ] For the husband is the head of his wife, as Christ is the head of the church, his body of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church, and gave himself up for her, to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water, through the word.

Which direction is Paul saying we need to be thinking in? Giving or getting? Well, it's obviously giving. So, what are the wives to be giving their husbands?

Someone said it? Respect. Respect. Respect, submission. They are to give that to their husbands. And husbands, what is Paul calling us to give to our wives?

Love. And to what extent are we as men to give our love to our wives? Someone. And what did he give to the church?

[ 6 : 04 ] He gave himself. Total giving. Christ loved the church, and he gave himself up for her. So he cares for her as a bride.

He feeds and cares for his body. So Paul presents Jesus as the ultimate example of marital, self-giving love.

Because he loved us. His heart loves us. He sacrifices himself for us. He submits to the Father's will. The only way this marriage union between Christ and his church works is if there is giving.

The only way this union works at all is because he gave. He gave. He didn't ask us.

He didn't demand and go into this relationship asking what he could get from us. Or to demand what we couldn't give. He gave.

[ 7 : 12 ] And he gave. And he gave. And his self-giving created this marriage. And his self-giving created a space where a bride that is stained and wrinkled and ugly can be washed and fed and made beautiful where she could flourish.

Grace is the only way sinners. Grace is the only way sinners can flourish in relationships. Grace. That self-giving love is the only way that marriage can flourish.

Now, if we kind of put this in Lutheran sort of terms, when there's nothing but law, demand, expectation, but not grace, there is inevitable failure, inevitable separation.

But self-giving, self-denying love brings intimacy. It's the only way that there can be intimacy and fellowship where sinners are involved.

And so, what does self-giving look like in marriage? Well, it looks like spouses giving each other the chance to be themselves.

[ 8 : 46 ] We're going to talk a lot about a lot of other things, but this is where I want to begin. It's giving them a space and a chance to be who they are.

So, every day, all day, we go around with masks on and costumes on.

Some of them are completely good and innocent. So, we put our best foot forward. We dress in a certain way. We don't say what we're thinking, because we only want to say what would be nice for other people.

And so, we're wearing these costumes, these masks. And like I said, a lot of them are good and innocent. There's nothing wrong with them. But in marriage, we give that person a chance to be themselves.

Grace is the place where, in a certain way, we can get back to the garden where they were naked and unashamed, where you don't have to wear a mask, because that person loves me and accepts me.

[ 9 : 55 ] Now, people have taken that too far, but we want to at least say that much, where I don't have to wear a mask, and I want to see you. And I may be ugly, but I want you to see me, and I want to see you.

I want to know you. So, husbands, that means that you let your wife be a woman. Whatever kind of woman she is, and not all women are the same.

I'm not putting them all into a category. What I'm saying is, is whatever kind of woman she is, sensitive, emotional, or sharp and intellectual, and whatever kind of woman she is, in marriage, you're giving her a chance for her to be herself, without demanding that she be something that you want her to be, the kind of woman that you want her to be.

And wives, it's giving your husband a chance to be himself. And I know that can be a terrible thing. Half of Katie Luther's job, probably as a wife to Martin Luther, was like keeping his clothes clean, and making sure his sheets got changed more than once a year.

I'm not saying that there isn't a place where, ladies, you need to reform your husbands. There is.

And men, I think you agree, that we need our wives to help us to be better, more put-together men.

[ 11 : 32 ] But what I am saying is, is that he is going to be a man. And you can't change that about him. And so husband, your wife, is going to do things you don't understand, that you don't get.

And my question is, is that all right? Or are you going to demand that she think and act the way that you think that she should think and act? And if there's that demand of, I'm not going to let you be the kind of person that you are, that inevitably, that's going to lead to misery.

Wives, your husbands are going to do some things that you just don't get. And they're going to handle situations differently than you do. And my question is, and the question of this chapter is, is, are you going to give them the space to do that, to be that kind of person?

I think for Stephanie and I, the first years of our marriage were about learning to fight better. And a lot of times we were just totally talking past each other.

And one day, so to speak, God opened the heavens and shine the light into our dark skulls and said, you two are different. you're thinking about this differently.

[ 12 : 56 ] And you need to quit getting so bent out of shape. You're, you're approaching this differently and that's okay. And so I was fighting over the topic. Men, maybe you understand this.

I was fighting over the subject matter. And she was fighting over the relationship. The topic was not the important thing. It was what it was saying about our relationship together.

And I was like, let's figure this out. I assume the relationship and that she wasn't making that assumption. The breakthrough happened, not when we changed our approach so much as we appreciated where that other person was coming from.

She was thinking differently than I was. And that's okay. And so now we can give each other space to be different. And now we can fight.

We do fight sometimes. And, and we sin against each other plenty, but create, but grace creates the space where we've learned to do that better, to love each other through those differences.

[ 13 : 59 ] And so I appreciate how she's thinking and she appreciates how I'm thinking. And we give each other that space. So the question is, what can I give?

Instead of what can I get? And it begins just by giving that person a space to be themselves. When you argue, the question should be, what can I give up to resolve this?

Not how can I win this argument, but what can I give up to resolve this? When you hurt one another, what apology can I give to heal this? When you're on vacation, what can I give to make his, her vacation better?

When you're in bed, what can I give to enhance his or her enjoyment of physical intimacy? When you're budgeting, what can I give up this month to give her or him more spending money?

When you're talking, how can I give him or her a listening ear? When you're leading men, how can I serve her better in my leadership?

[ 15 : 12 ] Not how can I make this thing exactly how I want it, but how can I serve her in it? When you're submitting ladies, how can I give him more respect when I disagree with his decisions?

When you have free time, how can I give him or her a better day? When you're offended, how can I give him or her the benefit of the doubt? When you're betrayed, how can I give grace?

When you have no feelings of love, how can I act in love? When you think he or she isn't as attractive as they used to be, well, how can I love her as the Lord loved the church?

And when you see his ugly side, how can I help him to be more beautiful? And when he's depressed, how can I give him encouragement? And when she's lost sleep, how can I give her rest?

Listen to David Murray. Give your mind, your heart, give your eyes, your hands, your body, your money.

[ 16 : 30 ] Give financially, emotionally, physically, intellectually, sexually, spiritually, Give away yourself, your whole self.

And if you believe the Bible, rather than your instincts and your culture, you will be more blessed in that giving than all the getting you can imagine. Now, really, that, like everything that I listed is in extremely tall order.

Give away myself? Completely? Well, we need that great self-denier, that great self-giver, Jesus Christ, working in our hearts.

we need to get to the cross. Because that's where our selfishness is put in its proper perspective. And that's where our holding back is put into its proper perspective.

And we need to live in the grace of the gospel, in the joy of the gospel, that Jesus gave himself for me because he loved me. And when I'm experiencing that as a good thing, as a blessing, when I'm living in the sunshine of Jesus' love, well, that's going to help me to put to death my selfishness. [ 17 : 57 ] That's going to give me the joy of the Lord in my heart. And that's going to give me the strength to give to my spouse. Philippians 2, let the same mind that was in Christ Jesus be in you.

And you remember what Paul does to drive home and to enable the Philippians to do that. Who, being in very nature God, made himself nothing.

And then it goes on. So husbands, wives, what is the key to a really happy marriage? It's turning that demand that we normally have in our hearts, that I want that person to do this for me.

We need to turn that completely around and ask, what can I do for that other person? And where do we get that giving spirit? We get it by living in faith in Jesus, living upon him, living in the goodness of that gospel.

So giving in marriage. We started out with this reality, that marriage is always between two sinners. The only exception is Christ and the church.

[ 19 : 24 ] And in that case, only one of them was sinful. But marriage in this life is always between two sinners. And any and all relationships that we have are between sinners.

Child, parent, parent, child, husband, wife, church member to church member, pastor to sheep, sheep to pastor, whatever relationship, employer, employee, whatever relationship we have, it's going to involve sin for now.

it's going to mean, I'm going to sin against people. And sadly, they're going to sin against me.

Probably the most painful of all experiences is being deliberately, or maybe not deliberately, hurt by someone else.

car accidents happen. Heart attacks happen. They are painful, but they're not personal.

Generally, no one is out there getting in a car accident on purpose. A heart attack is an impersonal attack. Cancer is an impersonal attack.

[ 20 : 46 ] But when we are maligned, when we are misunderstood, when the worst possible construction of an event is put upon something that we are doing, when we're abused, when we're neglected, when we're betrayed, when we're ignored, that is worse.

Because it wasn't a mistake. It wasn't a malfunction. There's personal choice, personal will behind it. And so, nails through Jesus' wrists, hands, that hurt.

Peter denying that he even knew Jesus. Judas just turning and betraying him. The felt abandonment of the Father. That was worse.

That was worse. And so, maybe, you've been hurt. We all have.

You've been hurt. Maybe it's your spouse, child, parent, friends, fellow church members. The most common response to being hurt is to either retaliate or to put distance between you and them.

[ 22 : 13 ] And now we're angry. And now we're bitter. And we're resentful. Carrie Fisher, you know Princess Leia?

She said this, resentment is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die. And so, I want to ask, as your pastor, are you sipping on the cup of resentment?

Holding the grudge? Are you taking in all those slights and misunderstandings, the wrongs, the words, and just sipping on it?

Drinking it in? I want to say, put it down. Put that cup down. That poison isn't making you happy. Indulging it isn't giving you justice.

It's not making the situation any better. It's not doing you good. It's not doing the other person good. There is an alternative to either attacking or resentment and running away.

[ 23 : 22 ] There is an alternative. And it's forgiveness. It's forgiveness. Our brother Mark Chansky brought us a word a few weeks ago from Proverbs 19.11.

Do you remember what it was? Anyone? The gist of it? Overlooking an offense. A man's wisdom gives him patience.

It is his glory to overlook an offense. Now, with many slights and with many misunderstandings and with many hurts, it is our glory it is our glory to overlook it.

To completely overlook it. To without a word, without bringing it up, without going to that person, without telling anyone about it, without anything on that other person's part.

We are going to talk about the place of repentance and forgiveness in a couple of moments. But right now, I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about with so many slights and misunderstandings

and inerrant words and, oh, that was a wrong way of handling that.

[ 24 : 27 ] With so many things like that, what we need to do is just to forgive, to forget, to cover over it in love.

Love is big enough, it's great enough to cover over how many sins? A multitude. A multitude of sins. Now, Satan, our pride, says hold on to it. Hold on to it. Keep sipping.

Keep sipping on that cup. But in love, we forgive it. In love, we just forgive it. We cover it over. We just say, that's not going to come between us.

I'm not going to let that affect my relationship at all. I'm just going to cover it over in love. And Proverbs says, that's our glory.

[ 25 : 26 ] That's our glory. Small, petty people pick up slights and things all along the way. You know, they're sort of like velvet suits.

You know, they're just collecting dust and strings and everything else. They just walk through life and they're just collecting all every little thing. But great people, Proverbs says, wise people, thoughtful people, they know in their hearts they've often cursed others.

They know they've messed up a lot and so they just cover it over. And so, Ecclesiastes 7, do not pay attention to every word people say. Is there a grace in that to just not pay attention to what everyone is saying sometimes?

There is. There's some real wisdom there. But what about the others? What about the things that are really hurtful?

The things that have really damaged you? Are you doomed to carry around that forever? Are you doomed to just have that grudge and that resentment?

[ 26 : 46 ] What do we do? Do we forgive just in the same exact way? Well, to answer that question, I want to look at how God forgives.

How God forgives. And there's just five, I'm going to give you five quick steps. One, God is willing and ready and eager to forgive anyone.

Jesus taught us that. He's the father that's looking down the road for the prodigal son to return. And as soon as that son returns, his heart is going out. He's running down the road.

That's his beautiful nature. That's God's compassionate character. He is willing. He is eager to be reconciled to all of his creatures that men might turn and live.

That's the first. Number two, God offers forgiveness to everyone. God offers and he means it.

[ 27 : 52 ] Release. Whoever comes, I will forgive them. He offers forgiveness and he means it and he offers it. On the basis of Jesus Christ, he offers free forgiveness forgiveness to all sinful men.

And that's grace. That's his heart. We can't miss that. He's really, genuinely offering it. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whosoever, whoever believes on him will not perish but have everlasting life.

But we have to say there is a big difference between offering forgiveness forgiveness and truly giving forgiveness. And three, God does not forgive everyone regardless of their response to his offer.

He offers it to all but not all respond. Many don't think they need forgiven so they never come.

Many don't believe what he says and so they stay away. Many don't understand the gospel and so instead of grace they replace it with I'll earn my way to that forgiveness.

[ 29 : 09 ] So either they don't come. Number four, God's full forgiveness is conditional on repentance. on the sinner turning from his way and changing his mind and changing his thoughts about God and about other people and about his sin.

And so when a sinner comes home, remember that the prodigal son before he came home it says he came to his senses. He had in that pigsty all of a sudden he realized his father was not the bad guy that he thought he was.

He wasn't such a miser like he thought he was. He started having new thoughts about his father and new thoughts about himself and so when a sinner comes home and changes his mind about God and about his sin then there's forgiveness.

And fifth, finally forgiveness through repentance brings reconciliation. Romans 5, we have been reconciled and having been reconciled that's what we have experienced.

The severed relationship is made whole. Now, what does that teach us? We only have a couple of minutes. What does that teach us? It teaches us a few things.

[ 30 : 30 ] We have to be willing and ready to forgive people who have sinned against us. That is the only response that the gospel creates. We cannot go around choking our fellow servants when God has forgiven us so much.

When the kings had mercy on us. And so, I'm saying we're not going to carry around that bitterness. We're not going to let that sin have power over us and over me.

And that's sort of the first kind of forgiveness that we give to someone. we put down that cup of resentment. We quit sipping on it. And we get one it's called positional forgiveness is how some people put it.

It's where we positionally, spiritually, we are now in the place that we want to forgive. We want to be reconciled. We are not holding that sin against them in such a way that now I want to attack and destroy and have revenge upon them.

We're not holding a grudge. We aren't bitter and angry. We're saying I'm ready to forgive. But is that it? No, because full forgiveness requires repentance in serious matters.

[ 31 : 47 ] And so, it is ungodlike to just overlook such a sin without any kind of repentance. According to Matthew 18, if a person sins, we must reprove them or rebuke them.

And if they don't respond in that way, we have to go up that ladder of church discipline, we have to take it to the next level and up the ladder we go. But if at any stage that person repents, we are to forgive them and be reconciled to them.

But here's what I want to emphasize. there is peace. There is happiness. There is joy.

There's life-giving power in just that first step. Those first steps of putting away the resentment. Not living with a grudge. Of being willing to forgive and offering to forgive.

Now sometimes we get the joy of that full reconciliation. Sometimes we get the joy of seeing that person realize their sin and come back and have a true and full change of heart.

[ 33 : 08 ] But you know what? Even if we can't get that or we don't get that, that doesn't mean we have to be miserable our whole lives. So give forgiveness.

Give forgiveness in the Proverbs 19, 11 sense of overlooking an offense. Covering over a multitude of sins and love. But in those big sins, getting to the place where we are ready to forgive, we're willing to forgive, our hearts are at peace, our hearts are softened.

We've now taken the sins to the judge. And we said, Lord, you're going to do right. And so, I'm handing these all over to you.

I'm not going to, this is your business, I'm not going to dwell on it, I'm going to give it to you. And please put it right in your own time. And then if you can, you can go all the way.

And you offer full forgiveness if they repent. But I guess my question as we end is this, is are you carrying around that bitterness? Are you carrying around resentment and grudges?

[ 34 : 21 ] You need to let it go. Get yourself to Jesus. Hand it over to the judge. Overlook it in love. And that's where happiness, there's happiness, there's peace.

So, giving in marriage, giving in forgiveness. I pray that God would help us to do these things. We are dismissed. We are dismissed. You are dismissed.