

Why Unforgiveness Is So Deadly to Your Marriage

Something that can clog up any marriage is gook. Gook refers to those sins and mistakes by which we willfully or unknowingly hurt people. Gook appears in every marriage, Christian or not.

I tell people at marriage conferences that it would be a living hell to be married to a perfect person. Why? Because then all the problems in the marriage would be your fault! As it is, with two sinners married to each other, any issue could be either spouse's fault, or even the fault of both.

In the book *Ten-Minute Marriage*, I give tools to help not only have a happier marriage but also a more efficient marriage. A marriage with less or managed gook is a much better marriage.

John and Jodi are a great couple, the kind of friends everyone likes to have. They are raising their children right, going to church faithfully, have close friends, and are in good physical health as well. What you don't know is how often they fight. I'm not just talking about how many times a week but how many times they fight about the same things. They report that some of the same arguments go back to their first year of marriage. I know you probably don't know any couples like this . . . but bear with me.

Once they get into one of these arguments it's as if all their Sunday school lessons go right out the window. When they fight, anything can be said and all of their past history is fair game. What's at the root of John and Jodi's behavior is an unforgiveness lifestyle. Their sins against each other stay in big piles, and this eats up a lot of time and emotion in their relationship.

There is another way to live. I call it the forgiveness

lifestyle. Up front it will cost you some time and effort. Down the road, though, it will save you save hundreds of hours of pain and conflict. Imagine just not having some of these conflicts in the future. I live this stuff, so I know it's sweet to live a forgiveness lifestyle.

Unforgiveness clogs the arteries of life in a relationship the way plaque clogs arteries in the body. In a forgiveness lifestyle, the life flow between the two of you increases. You may need to work a little hard to remove the gook in your marriage, but I encourage you to do this so you can have a healthy, growing marriage.

"You first" is a polite saying we use when two people intersect at a door at the same time. "You first" can be what you say to your companion when the waitress comes to your table to take your order. "You first" is also the best first step in the forgiveness lifestyle.

You might have heard some preaching on loving others as you love yourself. The way some people love themselves isn't to be wished on others! The fact is, you can't love or forgive others if you can't love or forgive yourself. So, as I said, "You first."

I strongly encourage both of you to do the exercises presented in this chapter to achieve the greatest results. I have assisted many couples who were bitter and unforgiving move through to a forgiveness lifestyle.

You, too, might experience what many of my clients have as they have walked through these principles together: felt lighter, could breathe easily, felt rejuvenated after recovering from an illness.

All of us make some mistakes; after all, that is part of the journey of life. When we think of forgiveness, we often think about how others have made mistakes against us. But too often we neglect the mistakes or sins we have committed against

others or ourselves. Sinning against ourselves can also cause us pain or woundedness that we need to address to live a forgiveness lifestyle.

The work we are about to do is good for the soul and for the marriage. So get ready to feel lighter and freer than ever before!

On paper, make a list of how you have possibly sinned against yourself. Here is a list of possible entries:

- Not listening to what is right
- Not taking care of my body
- Sexual behavior before marriage
- Angry outbursts
- Abortions
- Pornography
- Self-deception
- Grandiosity
- Not valuing myself
- The way I treat my family, friends or children

We all have sinned, and we all have sinned against ourselves. This sin toward ourselves can limit us in a forgiveness lifestyle. If you can't forgive a sin in your life, often you can't forgive others of the same sin. I've known clients who couldn't forgive their parent(s) and really once they could forgive themselves for being a poor parent then they could forgive their parent(s).

Once you have a reasonable list of your sins toward yourself, find a way to reconcile this list. Some have found it powerful to look in the mirror and literally using their name say, "Name, I sinned against you by _____," then close your eyes, open them and say, "I forgive you for _____."

Others have used an empty chair to ask themselves for forgiveness and then moved to that chair to forgive themselves. There is something powerful about facing yourself

and your sins against yourself.

Unfortunately, you can't just make a list. You do need to somehow out loud, ask for forgiveness and say out loud, "I forgive you," or "I don't forgive you." Knowing where you are with forgiving yourself can help you in the forgiveness lifestyle.

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