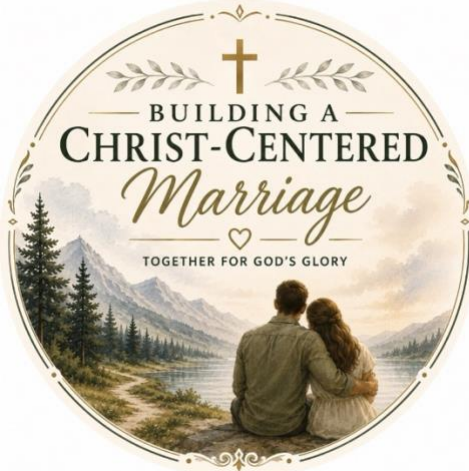




HEALING FROM PAST HURTS, BITTERNESS, AND UNFORGIVENESS

LESSON FOUR

BUILDING A CHRIST CENTERED MARRIAGE

Ten Biblical Lessons for Growing Together in Love, Faith, and Unity

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. God's Design for Marriage (A, B, C) | 6. God's Gift of Physical Intimacy |
| 2. Love, Respect, and Biblical Leadership | 7. Making Decisions Together |
| 3. Communication That Builds Unity | 8. Money, Work, and Stewardship |
| 4. Healing from Past Hurts, Bitterness, and Unforgiveness | 9. Protecting Your Marriage |
| 5. Growing Spiritually Together | 10. Growing Old Together and Leaving a Godly Legacy |

Main Scripture Passage: Colossians 3:12–15

Memory Verse: Ephesians 4:32

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

Main Truth: Christ can heal wounded hearts. He calls us to put away bitterness, choose forgiveness, walk in truth, and seek godly help.

Lesson Purpose: To understand how past hurts affect marriage and to learn biblical steps toward forgiveness, healing, and renewed trust.

LESSON OVERVIEW

Every marriage has moments of hurt. Some wounds come from careless words, broken promises, neglect, family problems, money choices, or long periods of silence. Other wounds come from serious sin and may leave deep fear and sorrow.

Time alone does not heal every wound. A hurt that is hidden may become bitterness. Bitterness keeps the pain alive and allows yesterday's wrong to control today's thoughts, words, and choices.

God does not ask us to pretend that nothing happened. He calls us to walk in truth. Healing may include honest prayer, confession, forgiveness, wise boundaries, patient rebuilding, and help from mature believers or trained helpers.

Forgiveness is often a process. Trust may also take time to rebuild. Christ gives grace for each step, and He can bring hope even when the path is long.

IN THIS LESSON, WE WILL STUDY THE FOLLOWING TRUTHS:

1. Healing begins when hurt is brought into the light before God.
2. Bitterness must be put away through grace and forgiveness.
3. Trust is rebuilt through truth, repentance, safety, and steady change.

MAIN SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Colossians 3:12–15

12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

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.

14 And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

PART 1: BRING THE HURT INTO THE LIGHT

Psalms 62:8

Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us. Selah.

Psalms 147:3

He heals the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.

Psalms 139:23–24

Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: **24** And see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.

1. Feeling hurt is not the same as being bitter. Hurt tells us that something painful happened. Bitterness grows when pain is held and fed.
2. Pour out your heart to God. Tell Him what happened, how it affected you, and what you fear.
3. Name the hurt honestly. Do not say, 'It does not matter,' when it continues to trouble your heart.
4. Ask God to search your own heart. You may have wrong responses to confess even when another person caused the first hurt.
5. Do not take blame for another person's sinful choice. Honest self examination is different from carrying false guilt.
6. Choose a wise and safe time to speak with your husband or wife. Explain the hurt without mocking, threatening, or attacking.
7. When the wound is deep, seek help from a mature believer, pastor, counselor, or trained helper who will honor truth and safety.

Practical Illustration: The Splinter That Was Covered

While repairing a wooden gate, Eli drove a splinter deep into his hand. He wrapped the sore place with cloth and kept working. Several days later, the pain was worse because the splinter was still inside.

His wife helped him uncover the wound, remove the splinter, clean the hand, and wrap it again. The cleaning hurt, but it allowed healing to begin.

A hidden hurt can work like that splinter. Covering it may seem easier for a time, but healing begins when the wound is brought into the light with truth, prayer, and proper care.

DISCUSSION AND SELF EVALUATION QUESTIONS

1. Is there a past hurt that still affects the way you treat your husband or wife?
2. Have you honestly poured out this hurt before God?
3. What part of your own response may need confession or change?
4. Who is a safe and godly person you could ask for help if the hurt is deep?

PART 2: PUT AWAY BITTERNESS AND CHOOSE FORGIVENESS

Hebrews 12:14–15

Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: **15** 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;

Ephesians 4:31–32

Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: **32** And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Romans 12:19

Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

1. Bitterness is a settled anger that keeps feeding upon a wrong. It may show itself through coldness, sharp words, revenge, or repeated accusations.
2. Bitterness does not stay in one part of life. Like a root, it spreads into thoughts, words, parenting, worship, and other relationships.
3. Forgiveness does not say that the wrong was small, harmless, or acceptable. It agrees with God that sin is wrong.
4. Forgiveness gives the right of revenge to God. It chooses not to make the other person keep paying through punishment, shame, or cruel reminders.
5. Forgiveness is based on the mercy we have received through Christ. We forgive because God has forgiven us, not because the offender deserves it.
6. Forgiveness may need to be chosen many times when painful memories return. Each time, bring the matter back to God instead of feeding bitterness.
7. Forgiveness and trust are not the same. Forgiveness may be given while trust is rebuilt slowly through truth and lasting change.
8. Forgiveness does not remove wise boundaries, needed consequences, or the duty to report a crime or protect someone from danger.

Practical Illustration: The Heavy Stone

A man picked up a heavy stone because he wanted to throw it at someone who had wronged him. He carried it through his workday, held it during supper, and kept it beside him at night.

The stone never touched the other person, but it tired the man and kept his mind upon revenge. At last, he laid it down and asked God to handle the wrong with perfect justice.

Bitterness is like carrying that stone. Forgiveness lays down revenge. It does not call the wrong good. It places justice in God's hands and frees the heart to obey Him.

DISCUSSION AND SELF EVALUATION QUESTIONS

1. How has bitterness affected your thoughts, words, or actions?
2. Are you trying to make your husband or wife keep paying for a past wrong?
3. What is the difference between forgiving a person and trusting that person?
4. What painful matter do you need to place into God's hands today?

PART 3: REBUILD TRUST THROUGH TRUTH AND REPENTANCE

Luke 17:3–4

Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. **4** And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.

Proverbs 28:13

He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.

Galatians 6:1

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

1. True repentance begins with honest confession. It names the sin without excuses, blame, or hiding.
2. Repentance includes forsaking the sin. Words such as ‘I am sorry’ are not enough when the same choice continues without change.
3. The person who caused harm should be willing to hear how the sin affected others and accept proper consequences.
4. Accountability is a gift, not an enemy. A repentant person welcomes godly correction, wise boundaries, and help that supports lasting change.
5. Trust grows through repeated truth and faithfulness. It cannot be demanded, rushed, or forced by using Bible words.
6. The wounded person also needs time, prayer, support, and freedom to speak honestly. Healing does not follow the same timetable for everyone.
7. Reconciliation becomes possible when there is truth, repentance, forgiveness, safety, and a willingness to walk differently.
8. Where there is violence, sexual abuse, threats, severe control, addiction, or repeated unfaithfulness, seek safety and proper help. Forgiveness never requires a person to remain in danger or hide serious sin.

Practical Illustration: Repairing the Cracked Wagon Tongue

A farmer found a crack in the tongue of his wagon. He did not cover it with paint and load the wagon as before. He stopped, examined the damage, and made a strong repair.

After the repair, he tested the wagon with a light load before trusting it with a heavy one. The repair was real, but wise trust grew through testing and time.

A wounded marriage may need the same care. Forgiveness can begin at once in the heart, but trust is rebuilt as truth, repentance, accountability, and faithful choices are seen over time.

DISCUSSION AND SELF EVALUATION QUESTIONS

1. If you caused hurt, have you confessed the wrong without excuses or blame?
2. What lasting change would help rebuild trust in your marriage?
3. Are you allowing time for trust to grow instead of demanding it?
4. What boundary or outside help may be needed to protect truth and safety?

A BIBLICAL PATH TOWARD HEALING

Healing usually comes through many faithful choices, not one emotional moment. The following steps can help a couple begin moving forward:

1. Bring the hurt to God. Pour out your heart and ask Him for truth, wisdom, and grace.
2. Name what happened. Speak about the sin or hurt clearly without making it larger or smaller than it was.
3. Examine your own heart. Confess sinful responses, but do not accept false blame for another person's choices.
4. Choose forgiveness. Give revenge to God and refuse to keep feeding bitterness.
5. Speak truth safely. Talk directly when it is wise and safe, or seek help from a trusted person when the matter is serious.
6. Look for repentance. True repentance includes confession, forsaking sin, accepting correction, and making needed changes.
7. Rebuild trust slowly. Let faithful actions, honesty, and accountability prove that change is real.
8. Keep walking with Christ. Pray, study Scripture, seek wise support, and return to these steps when painful memories rise again.

WHEN FORGIVENESS FEELS IMPOSSIBLE

Some wounds are so deep that forgiveness feels beyond reach. Begin with honesty: 'Lord, I am not able to do this in my own strength.' Ask Christ to make you willing to become willing.

Do not measure forgiveness only by feelings. Feelings may remain painful while the heart is choosing to obey God. Keep placing the hurt into His hands. Healing may be slow, but no step of obedience is wasted.

A SIMPLE PRACTICE FOR THIS WEEK

1. Spend ten quiet minutes asking God to search your heart.
2. Write down one hurt, one sinful response to confess, and one truth from Scripture.
3. Choose one safe step toward forgiveness, truth, or needed help.
4. Pray for grace to obey God even if your feelings do not change at once.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, You see every hurt in my heart. You know what was said, what was done, and how the pain has affected our marriage. Help me bring it into Your light instead of hiding it.

Search my heart and show me any bitterness, anger, revenge, pride, or sinful response. Help me confess my own wrong without accepting blame for another person's sin.

Lord Jesus, I cannot forgive in my own strength. Thank You for forgiving me. Help me release revenge into Your hands and choose forgiveness when painful memories return.

Where repentance is needed, bring honest confession, godly sorrow, accountability, and lasting change. Give us wisdom to rebuild trust slowly and truthfully.

Where there is serious sin or danger, bring truth into the light. Lead us to safety and proper help. Protect the wounded, correct the sinner, and do not allow Your Word to be used to hide evil.

Bind up our wounds and rule our hearts with Your peace. Help us walk in kindness, truth, patience, and love. Restore what can be restored, and keep us close to Christ through every step.

In Jesus' name, Amen.