

"Overcoming Hurts"

Living with the people that you love isn't always easy. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders. And this is a Bible study, "In SEARCH of the Lord's Way." God's word teaches us how to have happy lives in spite of our weaknesses. Stay tuned, and we'll see how.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. When people obey God, they find their lives grow richer and better. God's wisdom found in the Word truly leads us to an abundant life. Nothing could be better than to have a happy home filled with love and peace. Following the Lord is the way to find just such a home. God designed marriage for the happiness of us all. Thanks for taking time with us today. And we want to be a part of your life each week.

Sociologist Linda Waite and researcher Maggie Gallagher declare that, "The evidence from four decades of research is surprisingly clear: A good marriage is both men's and women's best bet for living a long and healthy life." Men and women in their first marriages, on average, enjoy significantly higher levels of physical and mental health than those who are either single, divorced or living together. The research on this is very strong.

We must realize our faith affects our marriage. When two committed Christians get married, they're less likely to get a divorce than those who have no commitment to Christ. Committed Christians who know and love the Lord deal with conflict and offenses differently than those who don't have faith in God. Their love for God means that they take their vows seriously and they strive to work through their problems rather than give up when times get tough. The love of God opens the door for them to show their love to their spouses in ways that keep the marriage alive and strong. We can overcome the hurts and offenses of life by following the Lord.

Now, we're offering this free booklet, "Together for Life" to anyone who asks. If you'd like a copy of our study and you live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Colossians 3:12-15, and we'll explore how to overcome our hurts in marriage.

Our reading today comes from Paul's letter to the Colossians chapter 3 verses 12 to 15. And in this he is describing who we are as Christians and how we should treat others.

So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.

And yes, we should be thankful for our spouses and thankful for the Lord. Who has loved us and forgiven us. Let's pray together. Oh Father, help us to be kind and compassionate, tenderhearted and loving. And Father help us to be forgiving even as you have forgiven us. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen.

Perhaps your marriage has suffered from years of unhealthy ways of dealing with conflict. We know we can't change the past, but we can start fresh for the future. We need to begin by taking responsibility for our part in the conflicts. Husbands and wives have different experiences, concerns, and perspectives about resolving conflicts. People often handle conflict the way that their parents

handled it. The more we can learn about how our spouse's family reacted to problems, the better opportunity we have to understand our spouses.

We must learn to handle our conflicts correctly, so we can keep our marriages healthy. First Peter 4 and verse 8 says, "Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins." Every day, spouses need to affirm their love and respect for one another. Saying, "I love you," "thank you," "I appreciate you," this shows them that we care by being open and honest. And, listening attentively and carefully builds intimacy and trust into the relationship. And your marriage is what you make it. If you feed it with good things, it will grow happier; but if you neglect your spouse and become selfish, you'll ruin your home.

Ephesians 4 and verse 29 says, "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear." Keep thinking of your family as more important than yourself. Philippians 2 verses 3 to 4 says, "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others." To maintain a healthy marriage, you must watch your attitude. When you disagree with your spouse, are you being selfish? Are you acting as a faultfinder? Are you trying to understand things from your spouse's point of view? Have you considered that your spouse may be reacting to something offensive that you've done?

Don't avoid conflict by the silent treatment. This only builds a larger barrier. Don't try to overcome conflict by acting out your emotions. Anger and shouting break down any opportunity for communication and working through problems. Instead, become an active and empathetic listener. Work hard at trying to understand what your mate is saying. Control your mouth and your emotions. Frustration causes much trouble in marriage. And men don't usually frustrate their wives by what they're doing so much as by what they fail to do. Failing to communicate, neglecting the needs of their wives, and indifference are forms of cruelty. These practices lead many women to end their marriages.

Selfish and unfeeling women who neglect the needs of their husbands, who put their husbands last in their priorities, and who constantly criticize and complain often alienate their husbands. Neglecting our spouses leads to great frustration and unhappiness. If the frustration doesn't stop, anger will grow. Life may become unbearable. Deal with your problems quickly, and don't let them multiply. Although every marriage has its bumps and its bruises, don't let them outgrow your marriage. If we allow unresolved anger to grow, it will eventually explode into deep wounds and great hurt. Ephesians 4:26 to 27 says, "Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity." Again, Proverbs 29:22 says that, "An angry man stirs up strife, And a hot-tempered man abounds in transgression."

Give each other permission to call a "time out." You know each of us may need a little more time to cool off before we begin looking honestly and fairly at our differences. Don't let the sun set on your anger, but calm your anger before you speak. Let your love for each other work out the differences between you.

Some people think that manliness or strength of character means never saying you're sorry, but refusing to apologize is selfish and prideful. Refusing to apologize deeply hurts others and builds barriers between people, barriers that take years to overcome. We all need to be willing to say, "I was wrong, and I'm sorry. I know that I hurt you and I don't want to hurt you again. Please forgive me." Accept responsibility for your mistakes. The Lord Jesus said, "If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your

offering there before the altar, and you go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering" (Matthew 5 and verse 23).

We can't maintain a right relationship with God if we're unwilling to deal with our sins against our spouses. First Peter 3 and verse 7 says, "You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered." How we treat our spouses matters to God! Sometimes it's better to be defrauded, neglected, and hurt than it is to blame your spouse for every transgression. "Love covers a multitude of sins." And God is merciful to us when we show mercy.

Marriage can be hard and harsh at times; and the real test of love is if it can survive the tests of the unlovely. Not every matter is worth confronting your mate over. Sometimes love means allowing them to be what they are, even when it's irritating. Philippians 4 and verse 5 says, "Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near." We all need a gentle spirit that's willing to let our love cover a multitude of sins and weaknesses. If you're having problems, focus on finding a solution to your differences rather than arguing, or accusing, or blaming.

No matter how troubled, frustrated, or angry we become, we must guard our tongues. Spoken words can cut and bruise the heart, and they're not easily forgotten. And once you speak, you can't take back your words. If you say something that cuts and hurts, apologize for it immediately. Using the word "divorce" can break a person's heart. This word wounds, rejects, and abandons hope for a continued relationship. Spouses who use such words plant the seeds of hopelessness and failure.

If there's physical abuse, unfaithfulness, or drug or alcohol abuse, then seek some help to keep your marriage alive. Everyone in an argument needs to step back in humility and ask, well, "Is winning this argument really worth losing my spouse?" When you love and respect your spouse, you want to build them up and encourage them. You want them to know that you admire them and are thankful to have them as your partner in life. Paul told the church, "Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you're also doing" (1 Thessalonians 5 and verse 11).

Just as we ought to encourage our church family, so we ought also to encourage our spouses and to assure them of our love. If someone verbally attacks, or criticizes, or blames you, don't respond in the same manner. Romans 12 and verse 17 says, "Never pay back evil for evil to anyone." Then verse 21 says, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." Think of the wonderful example of Jesus found in 1 Peter 2 and verse 23, "while being reviled, He did not revile in return; and while suffering, He uttered no threats, but He kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously." You know even while suffering on the cross, Jesus didn't verbally abuse or threaten anybody. First Peter 3:9 reminds us, "not to be returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing."

Now, your spouse might get angry with you, but you don't have to respond in the same way. Proverbs 15 verse 1 says, "A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger." Choose to respond with gentleness. There's no greater need in a relationship than to apologize and to forgive. When you've done something wrong, apologize immediately. When your mate has penitently asked your forgiveness, then, by all means, forgive.

Forgiveness is "forgetting against"; it means that once you've forgiven your mate, you never bring up the transgression again or hold it against them. Forgiveness opens the door to reconciliation, which means that we become "friends" again. Second Corinthians 5 and verse 19 explains, "that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation." When God forgave us, He never again counted that sin

against us. Psalm 103 and verse 12 says, "As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us."

We have to avoid the temptation to start figuring out ways to hurt the one who hurt us. We must not tell everyone that we know that he or she said or did something to offend us. We should never bring up our spouse's faults in front of others. Holding a grudge destroys any opportunity to grow beyond the problem. The Bible says, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:31 to 32).

Forgiving our loved ones is not just God's suggestion. It's God's law! When we fail to forgive our spouses, actually we condemn ourselves. The Lord Jesus said, "For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions" (Matthew 6:14 to 15). Instead of being haughty when we approach our loved ones who've hurt us, we should humble ourselves and approach them gently. Galatians 6 and verse 1 says, "Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted."

When you decide to forgive, you're free to begin a more healthy method of resolving conflict. A man who was telling his friend about an argument he had had with his wife said, "Oh how I hate it, every time we have an argument; she gets historical." Well, the friend said, "Well, you mean hysterical." And he said, "No, I mean historical. Every time we argue she drags up everything from the past and holds it against me." Folks, this is not forgiveness; forgiveness lets a matter go, and it lets it go for good. It never brings it up again.

Now, here is what should happen between Christian husbands and wives. When a spouse is truly hurt and needs to deal with an offense, he or she needs the courage gently and humbly to tell the one who offended, "I was hurt when you said this or did this." They need to explain what hurt them and why it hurt.

In response, the other spouse needs to say humbly and penitently, "I'm sorry I hurt you; please forgive me. I'll make every effort never to do this again." Once a sincere and penitent apology is given, the offended spouse needs to say, "I forgive you, and I will never bring this situation up to you again." Now this process of dealing with conflict is vital, because it opens the door to reconciliation. The promise not to repeat the offense and the promise not to hold it against the offender gives a foundation to maintain the relationship. This is how God treats us and how He wishes us to treat one another. Once the fires of marriage begin to cool, it's easy to take our spouses for granted and become complacent. People stop being as kind and courteous as they ought. They may neglect their spouse's needs and selfishly pursue their own desires. And in the end, someone gets devastated.

Let's pray together. Oh, Father help us to be good spouses. To repent of our misdeeds, and to forgive those who request it. Help us to love one another even as You have loved us. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

I hope you aren't listening today with a broken heart. And I hope your marriage is everything you hoped for. But if you're broken hearted, you may be asking, "How do I forgive this deep wound in my life? How do I stop holding these offenses against my spouse?" Think with me. How did Jesus forgive you of all your sins?

Can you recall the worst sins you have ever committed, the sins of which you're most ashamed? When you became a Christian, Jesus forgave them. Can you recall the smallest sins that you've ever

committed, things that you don't think are so bad but which offend God? When you became a Christian, Jesus forgave them, too. Every one of those sins – big or small – brought and still brings spiritual death if not forgiven. Where would we be without the blood of Jesus? His forgiveness and His grace is a blessing to us.

If the Lord Jesus could forgive us, can we not forgive? Forgiveness is better than forgetting, because forgiveness offers the hope of reconciliation. Forgiveness brings reconciliation, making friends again; and Jesus bore the cross paying for our sins so that we might be forgiven and may be able to be a friend to God. God wants us to remain close to Him, so He made the way possible through the blood of Jesus for us to be forgiven. To become a Christian you must believe in the Lord Jesus with all your heart. Out of love for Him, you must repent of your sins by turning away from all evil and turning to what's good. Upon the confession of your faith, be baptized into Christ. And in baptism, the blood of Jesus will wash away your sins. Get right with God today!

We hope that today's study about overcoming hurts has been a blessing. We're offering this free booklet, "Together for Life" free of charge. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. You can also download these lessons or a newsletter online at our website: www.searchtv.org. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area. Now, you can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now, don't worry, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you get to heaven.

Why not get your heart focused on God today. Do it by worshiping at church. There's probably a church of Christ that's in your area. If you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. We want you to be able to go and meet the folks who are there. They'd love to have ya as their guests. Well, we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell your friend about this program. Let em know that your watching and encourage them to watch too. As always we say, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.