

Copyright © Two Journeys Ministry  
Andrew M. Davis  
Class Notes

[www.twojourneys.org](http://www.twojourneys.org)

Please use in accordance with the copyright policy found at twojourneys.org

## **Strengthening Your Marriage**

**Paul David Tripp: *What Did You Expect***

**Commitment 1: We will give ourselves to a regular lifestyle of confession and forgiveness**

### I. Introduction to the Course

#### A. Marriage is the Most Significant Relationship in the World

1. It is the first relationship God made... from the very beginning

***Mark 10:6-9 At the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.' <sup>7</sup> 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, <sup>8</sup> and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one. <sup>9</sup> Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."***

2. Marriage is central to God's plan for the world

***Malachi 2:15 Has not the LORD made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth.***

***Ephesians 5:31-32 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." <sup>32</sup> This is a profound mystery-- but I am talking about Christ and the church.***

#### B. As a Result... Marriage is Under Constant Satanic Attack

1. Satan knows that the health of every church is directly connected to the health of the marriages in the church
2. From the moment you say "I do!", your marriage becomes a target for Satan's temptations... he is seeking to pull you apart
3. A healthy church must help its couples fight for the health of their marriages

C. Paul David Tripp's *What Did You Expect? Redeeming the Realities of Marriage* will be our guide

## II. Tripp's Preliminary Insights

### A. Having Realistic Expectations

1. You are conducting your marriage in a fallen world... so we must expect troubles

***John 16:33 I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."***

***1 Peter 1:6-7 In this [salvation] you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. <sup>7</sup> These have come so that your faith-- of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire-- may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.***

2. You are a sinner married to a sinner
  - a. Indwelling sin is powerful and irrational... the "very thing we hate, we do; and the things we want to do, we don't do." (Rom. 7)
  - b. There will be moments of jealousy, bitterness, and conflict
  - c. God has brought you together to be instrumental in each other's final salvation from sin... a "workshop of sanctification"
  - d. We need to realize this deep work of sanctification will not be quick, and it will not be painless
3. God is faithful, powerful, and willing: God's infinite grace in Jesus Christ is more than enough for you to have a healthy, fruitful marriage despite your sinfulness
4. The question is: do you have proper expectations for your marriage??

### B. Reason to Continue

1. Basic issue: HOPE... without it, you cannot make progress in your marriage
2. After years of messing up, couples frequently lose hope... "This is not the way it was meant to be."
3. The basic issues are rooted in *worship*... are we properly loving God as the ultimate love of our lives? If not, we have become idolaters
4. Idols destroy marriages... whether money, success, pleasure, power, sex, comfort, possessions
5. The goal: a marriage rooted in worship of God

- a. A marriage of love, unity, and understanding will flow out of a daily worship of God as creator
  - b. A marriage of love, unity, and understanding will flow out of a daily worship of God as sovereign
  - c. A marriage of love, unity, and understanding will flow out of a daily worship of God as Savior
6. Reason to continue: discovering God himself in the increasing health of your marriage... that alone is reason to continue

### C. The Road Ahead: Six Commitments

- Commitment 1: We will give ourselves to a regular lifestyle of confession and forgiveness
- Commitment 2: We will make growth and change our daily agenda
- Commitment 3: We will work together to build a sturdy bond of trust
- Commitment 4: We will commit to building a relationship of love
- Commitment 5: We will deal with our differences with appreciation and grace
- Commitment 6: We will work to protect our marriage

Now... Commitment 1: We will give ourselves to a regular lifestyle of confession and forgiveness

Two parts: 1) Coming Clean: Confession; and 2) Canceling Debts

### III. Coming Clean: Confession

#### A. Key quotes

“We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done.” [Book of Common Prayer]

“Since nothing we intend is ever faultless, and nothing we attempt is ever without error, and nothing we achieve is without some measure of finitude and fallibility we call humanness, we are saved by forgiveness.” [David Augsburger]

***1 John 1:8-10 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our***

*sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. <sup>10</sup> If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.*

***James 5:16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.***

## B. Case Study

A couple who never came clean; who were only good at pointing the finger at the other, at leveling charges, at making self-serving excuses. They were extremely skilled at acrimony and division. They continually rehearsed in their own hearts all the perceived wrongs their spouse had committed against them... thus they had burned away all their affection for each other and had very little hope for their future. When Paul Tripp asked them what was wrong with their marriage, they both immediately answered by stating the other person's name! Therefore, Tripp said he was out of a job as a counselor because there were no true seekers in the room... only two people who hoped he would fix their spouse

1. How many marriages are stuck in this same cycle of failure to look inward honestly, blame for the other, loss of all affection, hopelessness?
2. Key principle: No change takes place in a marriage that does not begin with confession.
  - a. Confession is the doorway to growth and change in a marriage
  - b. Without it, the cycle described above is guaranteed
  - c. With it, the future is actually bright!

## C. The Grace of Confession

1. It is a grace to know right from wrong
2. It is a grace to understand the concept of indwelling sin
3. It is a grace to have a properly functioning conscience
4. It is only grace that protects us from self-righteousness
5. It is a grace to see ourselves with accuracy
6. It is a grace to be willing to listen and consider criticism and rebuke
7. It is a grace not to be paralyzed by regret
8. It is a grace to know that we can face our wrongs because Christ has carried our guilt and shame

#### D. The Daily Habits of a Confession Lifestyle

1. We will be lovingly honest
2. We will be humble when exposed
3. We will not excuse
4. We will be quick to admit wrongs
5. We will listen and examine
6. We will greet confession with encouragement
7. We will be patient, persevering and gentle in the face of wrong
8. We will not return to the past
9. We will put our hope in Christ

Tripp: “When the shadow of the cross hangs over our marriage, we live and relate differently. We are no longer afraid to look at ourselves. We are no longer surprised by our sin. We no longer have to work to present ourselves as righteous. We say goodbye to finger-pointing and self-excusing. We abandon our record of wrongs. We settle issues quickly. And we do all these things because we know that everything we need to confess has already been forgiven, and what is needed for every new step we will take has already been supplied. We can live in the liberating light of humility and honesty, a needy and tender sinner living with a needy and tender sinner, no longer defensive and no longer afraid, together growing nearer to one another as we grow to be more like him.

Now who wouldn’t want a marriage like that?”

#### IV. Canceling Debts

##### A. Case Study: “I don’t think I will ever be able to forgive him!”

1. Jeb and Sally
2. Sally said Jeb is basically a good man, working hard and providing for them, loving the children
3. BUT... there have been years of conflicts, irritability, constant low-grade tension, hair-trigger outbursts... no knock-down, drag-out fights, but consistently poor communication... a very negative feel in the air; day after day, misunderstandings.

4. They ended most days in disappointed silence, rehearsing the sins the other has committed... as the years past, the list grew longer and the burden of unforgiven sin heavier
5. Why had this happened? The patterns of sin were not accompanied by patterns of confession and forgiveness
6. Bottom line: they really didn't like each other anymore.

## B. The Harvest of Unforgiveness

### 1. The Law of Sowing and Reaping

***Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.***

### 2. Stages of the harvest of unforgiveness

- a. Immaturity and failure (most people enter their marriages young, immature, and selfish... and people do dumb things as a result; that leads to accusations, blame, judgment, punishment rather than confrontation, confession, repentance, and forgiveness... thus they are right away setting the bad course of their marriage)
- b. Falling into comfortable patterns (since confrontation, confession, repentance and forgiveness are hard work, it seemed easier to skip it day after day)
- c. Establishing defenses (building up walls of defense against each other's irritated accusations... the "best defense is a good offense" so each moves out vigorously to attack the other by criticism and blame; how "difficult he/she is to live with"; this is coupled with a blind self-righteousness, convincing ourselves that our sins are minor and not really the problem; our spouse is no longer our top advocate, but our bitterest adversary)
- d. Nurturing dislike (the basic perspective on the spouse is negative, and the person becomes consistently easy to dislike; couples actually have a hard time remembering what attracted them to the person to begin with)
- e. Becoming overwhelmed (at some point, all of this becomes overwhelming; you begin to dread getting up in the morning... you are walking on eggshells with each other, wondering when the next explosion will hit)
- f. Envy of other couples (the "grass is greener" hits huge; we see other couples happier than us... and we can be tempted to throw that person in your spouse's face)

- g. Fantasies of escape (it always seems to lead here eventually... people begin to think about actual escape scenarios, no matter how devastating they may seem)

C. Then... Why Don't Couples Just Forgive??

1. Debt is power
2. Debt is identity
3. Debt is entitlement
4. Debt is weaponry
5. Debt puts us in God's position

So... unforgiveness is seductive... and very evil.

D. What Is Forgiveness?

1. Vertical commitment, followed by a horizontal transaction

Like the parable of the Ten Thousand Talents:

***Matthew 18:21-35 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" 22 Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.***

***23 "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. 25 Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. 26 "The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' 27 The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. 28 "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. 29 "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' 30 "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. 31 When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. 32 "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. 33 Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' 34 In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.***

<sup>35</sup> ***"This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."***

- a. Begin by realizing the level of debt God has forgiven us
- b. Make a commitment to forgive whatever grievance you may have against your spouse as being a small amount compared to what God has forgiven you
- c. Forsake putting yourself in God's position of demanding "Pay me what you owe me!"
- d. Give yourself fully and humbly to God
- e. Take the matter completely to God and give it to him
- f. BUT... do not merely eat the offense and never mention it... then the spouse cannot grow
- g. Be willing to initiate with your spouse and humbly show him/her his fault, just between the two of you (Matthew 18:15)
- h. If he/she confesses humbly, then forgive warmly and immediately
- i. If not, it will take a longer process... forgive *judicially* in your heart based on the atonement of Christ, while working on relational reconciliation
- j. You may have to go to your spouse more than once on the issue; be patient; pray for the spouse to repent; give the matter to God; do not withhold kindness in the meantime

#### E. When Is Forgiveness Needed?

1. Only when the spouse has done something the Bible calls sin
2. You do not need to ask forgiveness if something happened as a matter of human weakness (like forgetting in the busyness of a day to pick something up at the store), or a complete accident (like tripping and breaking something); in such cases, it is good to express remorse at the cost to the other person... but it is not a sin issue, therefore not a forgiveness issue

#### F. What Forgiveness Requires

1. Humility
2. Compassion
3. Trust

4. Self-control
5. Sacrifice
6. Remembering (how much God has forgiven us...10,000 talents)

G. A Better Harvest

1. You can choose to carry the bitter list and punish the other
2. Or you can invest in forgiveness... and reap the kind of marriage everyone wants