

Coaching: Marriage Matters



Week 12

A Laboratory for Grace

Marriage serves many purposes. Not only is marriage a sacred setting designed for partners to experience intimate companionship, sexual expression, child rearing, and sharing in the work that makes up daily living—it is also an extraordinary laboratory for grace. Marriage allows us to learn, on a daily basis, how to get along with others and how to practice forgiveness regarding the shortcomings of another.

Grace is the offering of unmerited favor to others, and it should be the by-product of the love that a married couple has for one another. Grace is the relational lubricant that helps keep the wheels of a marriage from squeaking. There is no other setting in life (maybe with the exception of being part of the crew of a submarine or one of the astronauts in the International Space Station) where the proximity between two people requires as much forbearance—for the sake of maintaining a workable, productive, and enjoyable coexistence.

There are also few relationships in life where a person can be hurt as badly as in marriage. Even when fault is admitted and forgiveness is sought for a major breach of the marriage covenant, extending grace to the offending spouse can be very difficult. It takes a lot of soul searching to be able to rekindle the desire to rebuild an intimate relationship that has been fractured.

Extending grace to another doesn't mean that you are adopting a passive or permissive attitude. It merely means that others don't have to be without fault to be valued and honored. Grace does not require you to compromise what is right; instead, grace is in evidence when you choose to forgive, adapt, and move forward. Grace embraces the idea that forgiveness following genuine remorse can actually contribute to the realization of a greater good.

Choosing to practice grace helps nurture, repair, and sustain any marriage. Forgiveness interrupts what might otherwise result in a tragic and destructive cycle of accusation, retribution, and alienation.

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