

What Happens When Your Feelings Get Hurt

by Lloyd Biddle

Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.”
Colossians 3:13

Jill and Mark had only been married six months when some challenges in their relationship began to emerge. After they wed, they combined their checking and savings accounts in an attempt to bring financial oneness to their marriage. The couple decided that Jill would take responsibility for paying the bills each month. After a few months of paying the routine household expenses, Jill recognized that each of them would need to adhere to a budget for their personal expenses in order to keep the family's finances in order. So each of them agreed to restrict their discretionary spending to \$150 per month per person. Having looked carefully at the numbers, they recognized they could not spend any more than this on themselves if they planned to pay all the bills on time each month, tithe, and save for their future. But only two months after they made that decision, Jill noticed that they were short \$70 in the checking account on money they needed to pay the car note because Mark had overspent his discretionary budget to purchase a new cell phone. In the house Jill grew up in, paying the bills on time was a high priority. Her parents never created debt outside of a mortgage and one car loan. Jill was angry and disappointed with Mark. What should she do?

I have been happily married over 17 years. One thing I have learned over this time is that managing offenses well is crucial to welfare of my relationship with Debbie. I want to share with you an example from my marriage to help you understand how important forgiveness and reconciliation is in marriage. A few weeks ago, Debbie sent me an encouraging e-mail while I was at work. It read:

Lloyd,

I am amazed at how hard you work and how you keep going and going! I appreciate all that you do for our family and for me in particular...especially how gracious you are with my shortcomings. I love you with an everlasting love. Be encouraged as you work through each day, knowing that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

With all my love,
DB

I was having a particularly hectic week when I read this message at work on the afternoon of November 28, 2007. As you might imagine, this message gave me a real emotional lift. Of all the wonderful things Wifie said in the aforementioned e-mail, the comment regarding my graciousness with Debbie shortcomings is the subject I want you to focus on. The real truth of the matter is, and Debbie was fully aware of this fact when

she sent that message, she is equally as gracious with my many shortcomings. I often don't come home from work at a reasonable hour; I am late cutting the grass, not very good at home repair, I eat too much and the list goes on and on. But Debbie's love for me covers up my shortcomings and I extend the same grace to her. We appreciate each other strengths and praise each other and thank the Lord for the wonderful qualities He has built into us. But when it comes to our weakness and failures, we extend each other grace.

Now, how do you extend that grace in your own marriage? Let's return to the example of Jill and Mark. The first thing Jill should do with her anger about the overspending situation is to take a minute and pray about it. Through prayer, Jill can turn the problem over to God so He can help. With some marital offenses, this may be all that is required. I am a living witness that sometimes God has answered my prayer about a problem I was having with Debbie without me saying a word. After prayer, the next thing I know she would come to me and apologize for something she did that hurt me without me ever saying a word to her about the situation. Through prayer, God can work in Mark's heart and cause him to come to Jill and admit his error and pledge not to repeat it. But let's say, Jill prays and is unable to reach peace about this situation. The next godly thing Jill should do is respectfully let Mark know what he did and how it made her feel. Matthew 18:15 states: *"Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother."* It is possible in your marriage for one person to be really hurt and angry over something that was said or done and the offender to be totally unaware. You can't assume when it comes to offenses. If you are upset by what your spouse has done, it is your responsibility to tactfully let them know what the problem is and give them the opportunity to make amends. What do you do if you pray about an offense and nothing happens, then you inform your spouse and no change occurs? Then you need to understand and apply what Jesus told Peter to do with such matters: *"Then Peter said to Him, Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times? Jesus answered, I tell you, not seven times, but seventy times seven."* Matthew 18:21-22

Jesus us teaches us to have unlimited forgiveness for people who sin against us. He commands us to extend this grace to each other out of love and respect for His forgiveness of all our sins against Him. And you know how many sins those are? My guess is they total more than seventy times seven. God is so serious about forgiveness that He tells us that He will not forgive our sins if we refuse to forgive our brother or sister who sins against us. How do you apply this principle to your marriage? Well, I am glad you asked. "Love is not irritable, and it keeps no record of when it has been wronged. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance. Love never fails." 1 Corinthians 13:5b, 7, 8a Listen brothers and sisters, if you want your marriage to last, you must practice love and learn to love your mate despite their shortcomings and sins, just as Jesus loves and "stays married" to you despite yours. This is not easy. In fact, it can be very hard. You will have to die to your self in order to master this biblical principle, but the rewards are a happy marriage and an eternal blessing from the Lord.