

Angie's Marriage Column ~ July 7, 2010
Repentance * Forgiveness * New Life

REPENTANCE, FORGIVENESS, and How to Be Accountable In Marriage

Ask Angie: If you have asked God for forgiveness do you still need to ask your spouse?

Marriage Guidance: Let's take a closer look at some of the issues that are involved with repentance and seeking forgiveness so we can better understand what to do in this situation.

Seeking Christ's Forgiveness

When we go to Christ with our sin(s) or perhaps our "sinful lifestyle" it means we have a heart-felt sorrow for what we did or for how we had been living and are "now" ready to TURN away from our sins (that lifestyle) and become a new person (transformed) in God through Jesus Christ.

Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. (2 Corinthians 7:10)

When we seek forgiveness of our sins it means we are repentant for something we have done that we would like to change or stop doing about ourselves. True inner healing begins through our repentance and the work of the Holy Spirit within our lives. We become "new" people in Christ with a change of heart, attitude and motives, and we become restored to God.

Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. (John 1:11)

When we repent and seek forgiveness it will slowly make a positive difference in our lives as we grow and mature in the Word. Repent means to "turn", which implies a change in attitude and behavior. It is turning

away from our sins and moving towards God and becoming a part of God's family.

This spiritual growth process does not happen all at once, but as we become closer to God through our prayers and reading of the Word, and making a conscience effort to change our lives for the better we become more Christ-like every day. This is the Christians purpose for living. Transformation is a progressive process as we grow and gain knowledge in Jesus Christ.

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is in Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:18)

As Christians we will still have the capacity to sin because will never be perfect like Jesus Christ, **but through forgiveness of sins we have been "set free" from sins power over us and no longer have to give in to it** because the Holy Spirit helps us to overcome our temptation to sin and the control that sin has over our lives. **We no longer are "slaves to sin"!**

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. (Galatians 5:24-25)

Seeking Spouses Forgiveness

So I said all that to say this; if you are sorrowful for your sin and have turned away from that kind of lifestyle, do you think you will feel right about keeping your transgression a secret from your spouse? Will it not consume you with guilt and keep you from moving on with your new life in Christ? Do you think you will be able to let the sin go without receiving forgiveness from your spouse?

I'm thinking that perhaps you are apprehensive to tell your spouse about your sin...afraid of the consequences. I can understand this, but I also know that if you are truly seeking healing from your past and want to get right with God and to lead a pleasing life for Him then this hidden secret

buried within your soul may continue to burden you. If repentance is all about receiving forgiveness than why would you not want to receive forgiveness from your spouse?

Repentance Means Accountability for our Actions

Christ's forgiveness frees us from being under the control of sin, but if we are married then we are also accountable to our spouse. But if we never confess our sin to our spouse, how can then we be accountable for our actions to them after we repent? This is not fair to them.

When a spouse sins against the marriage in some way, the best way to promote healing is through knowing we are forgiven by our spouse and then being accountable for our actions until trust and personal healing can be repaired in the marriage. Although spouses are always accountable to each other, after a spouse trespasses against the marriage there is usually special effort that the transgressor must do to help the healing process for both of them. And that is usually where accountability and responsibility come in.

If there be no account of your sin with your spouse, then the chances are greater that you may get caught up in that very same sin or lifestyle again, especially if your spiritual growth and relationship with Christ have just begun and you are new in walking in Christ.

As I said earlier, just because we repent and have been forgiven does not mean that we are now free from the evil and the temptations of the world. On the contrary, if we do not keep ourselves strong and focused on God's will for our lives we will fall back into sin. We must make a conscience daily effort to always place God FIRST in our lives so we can base our lifestyle on the principles of what Christ taught. We must TRUST in God with our marriage!

Our Christian walk is an ongoing process that never ends but continues to grow, and as we grow and mature in the Word, temptation gets easier to walk away from—we can say "NO" to the temptations and feel good about our lives knowing that the Spirit of Christ is working within us...because we

have the faith to believe that he would protect us from tempting situations just like he said he would. God provides us with the self-control to walk away!

Repentance must be tied to our actions or it isn't real. We show accountability to others in how we live our lives. If your spouse does not know about the sin or what you did in the past, then how can you be accountable for your actions to them?

The other issue you must think about is **what if your spouse finds out on his or her own what you did?** Will it not be even worse if they find out and then think you were trying to keep it from them? I think it will be much more difficult for them to forgive you if they find out about your transgression from someone or somewhere else.

Scripture does not really talk about this issue and so we have no biblical foundation to support a definite answer on. Therefore this must be something that you pray about and sincerely ask Christ what he would want you to do. After praying about it, listen to your heart. What does your heart tell you? If you are truly repentant for what you did then your heart will probably lead you to talk with your spouse and seek forgiveness from them, if only to free yourself of this pent up transgression for good.

All of these issues we have mentioned need to be taken into account. Pray about all of this and ask Christ to give you the answer you need to do what is right for yourself, your spouse and your marriage. And remember that if we have not accepted Christ into our own life and have not make the changes to live a pleasing life for God, one sin leads to another sin until it becomes a way of life.

Our sinful way of life (lifestyle) can only be changed through our genuine repentance and the power of the Holy Spirit to change our behavior and to make us new people in him. On our own, without God we are unable to change our lives and stop being controlled by sin—**we need God!!**

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature, sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You USED to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the NEW SELF, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator." Colossians 3:5-10

God Bless!
In Christ,
Angie and Frank

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