



Wardrobe by God: The God of Second Chances

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." —Genesis 3:6–13

The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life. —Genesis 3:21–24

Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, "With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man." Later she gave birth to his brother Abel. —Genesis 4:1–2

Why would we want to mess with His design? If only Eve had thought about what her choice was going to cost her . . . If only *we* would think . . .

I. Because of our sin:

1. We cover up from each other.
2. We try to hide from God.
3. We blame others.

II. Because of God's grace:

1. He meets us where we are.
2. He ministers to us.
3. He gives us a second chance.

III. We need to give each other second chances in marriage:

1. When we unintentionally or intentionally hurt each other
 2. When our temperament differences bug each other
 3. When our gender differences make life difficult
- Being a second chance “giver” and “receiver” requires hard work—with hope in sight.
 - A second chance “refuser” works hard also—but the hard work continues on ahead as far as one can see.
 - Forgiveness is the ingredient that allowed God to give Adam and Eve a second chance, and it is required if we are to be able to give each other a second chance.

IV. The case for forgiveness

1. God’s desire is that oneness, reconciliation, and unity characterize marriages. Forgiveness is the “oil” that enables this to happen.

How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!

—Psalm 133:1

2. Intimacy can be developed only between two hearts that are tender and forgiving; hard, unforgiving hearts are the enemies of intimacy.
3. Forgiveness is an “unnatural” act.
4. Forgiveness is a uniquely human act.
5. Forgiveness then must be more than an emotion—emotions cannot be commanded.

“Forgiveness is the key which unlocks the door of resentment and the handcuffs of hatred. It breaks the chains of bitterness and the shackles of selfishness.”

—Corrie ten Boom

V. What makes forgiveness possible?

1. The foundation for forgiveness is to accept that we are forgiven in Christ.
But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
—Romans 5:8

2. We need to see that we all are in need of forgiveness.
For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.
—Romans 3:23

3. We need to accept God's forgiveness and grace.
For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.
—Ephesians 2:8–9

He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.
—1 John 5:12–13

VI. Truths about forgiveness

1. Forgiveness is a unilateral act.
 Forgiveness does not require a response from the one whom we are forgiving.
Reconciliation does require a response of confession or repentance.
 We were not created to carry bitterness or hatred towards anyone.

2. Forgiveness is a daily choice.

3. Forgiveness is both an event and a process.

4. Forgiveness is impossible apart from the power and grace of God.

5. It forgives even when “justice” is not seen.

6. Forgiveness does not mean ignoring sinful behavior.

7. Forgiveness does not keep ledgers.

8. Forgiveness brings incredible freedom.
“Intimate, authentic relationships are exactly what God has in mind for us. He created us for relationships and wants us to experience them at their best.”
—Bill Hybels

Helpful Resources

A Grace Disguised, Gerald Sittser.

Restoring the Fallen, Wilson, et al.

Group Questions

1. What strikes you about God's interaction with Adam and Eve after they sinned and went against God's design for them?

2. Why is that we seem to have such a difficult time accepting responsibility for our actions and are so prone to excusing ourselves or blaming someone else? Why does this seem to be so pronounced in marriage?

3. How has your experience with God showing grace and forgiveness to you affected the way you respond to your spouse when they sin against you or disappoint you?

4. What do you see as the difference between forgiving and enabling continued sinful behavior?

5. What have you found to be most helpful in your forgiving each other and giving each other a "second chance?"

Questions for Couples

1. How have you found forgiveness to be key in your marriage?

2. What has been the biggest obstacle to forgiveness for you as a couple?

3. What relational advantage is there in withholding or granting forgiveness? What are the risks?

4. What areas do you need to ask forgiveness for from your spouse in order to restore your relationship to what God desires it to be?