



Battle of the Sexes- Session 6  
Staying in Love and Leaving the Ring

**Introduction**

There are people that are called body language experts. These experts are able to evaluate how a person speaks, looks, and uses their body to communicate and to even tell if someone is lying or not. There are times in our lives when our body language tells a lot about our genuine attitude.

Paul said in Ephesians 5:1-2: ***Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children. <sup>2</sup> And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.***

So just as our body language can show our attitudes, so also our actions can reveal our intentions. Just as in a marriage, we can tell in our thoughts and actions who we are imitating. And if we are imitating Christ in our marriages, then we will have certain ingredients of our lives that people will see. Today we are going to learn the ingredients for what it takes to stay in love and get out of the battle of marriage. And we will see today that when we take the right steps that we are being Christlike in our attitude and actions.

**These are the ingredients for staying in love and to “leave the ring of the battle”:**  
Confession (1 John 1:8-10), Forgiveness (Ephesians 4:32), and Assuming the best (1 Cor 13:7).

**1. The first step: As imitators of God we must learn that we can’t stay in love without confession.**

**Have a volunteer to read 1 John 1:8-10**

**1 John 1:8-10: <sup>8</sup> 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 is not in us.**

In this passage you see the promise of God when we are open about confessing sin in our lives and to each other. Based on these passages there are three points for us to remember that help us to be open to confession within our marriages.

**A healthy marriage reminds us of indwelling original sin.** One of the most tempting fallacies for us – and for every human being in this fallen world – is to believe that our greatest problems exist outside us rather than inside us. The mirror of self-examination helps us honestly see a need for

forgiveness. 1 John 8-10 confirms the need. Here is how John 1:8 usually plays out in marriage. The Bible doesn't say, "Wives seek to get your husband fixed; and husbands, seek to get your wives fixed." But if we were honest that is how many marriages operate.

**A healthy marriage is impossible while practicing your inner-lawyer.** All of us carry inside ourselves an inner lawyer who is easily activated and quickly rises to our defense. We've all been in one of those moments when someone is pointing out some wrong in us, and although we are not speaking aloud, we have already begun a silent defense of ourselves against what they are saying. As they are pointing to evidence of a need for change, we are marshaling evidence that we are not, in fact, the person they contend we are.<sup>1</sup>

**A healthy marriage needs, not cross-examination, but self-examination.** The self-examination that we face comes from the way that we approach God's Word in our lives. How we approach the Word of God in our marriages both individually and together affects how we live in our marriages. **James 1:19-20 (ESV)** "God's anger is poles apart from ours. What provokes our anger (injured vanity) never provoke his; what provokes his anger (evil) seldom provokes ours." –John Stott

### **What does it look like to confess?**

- 1. Confession is honest** – Truth not spoken in love ceases to be helpful because the message gets twisted and distorted by other human emotions and agendas. Warren Wiersbe: Truth without love is brutality, and love without truth is hypocrisy."
- 2. Confession humbles** – Humility means the willingness to look in the mirror of God's Word and understand that whatever we see there has already been covered by the blood of Jesus.
- 3. Confession refuses to excuse** – Refusal to excuse means resisting the urge to build arguments for our righteousness. It means refusing to turn the tables on the other, making sure he or she knows that we are not the only sinner in the room.
- 4. Confession quickly owns up**–Quickness to own up means the commitment to *immediately* invite the Holy Spirit into those situations and do the hard work of wrestling with our hard hearts. It shouldn't take days and weeks." "vv27 and do not give the devil a foothold."

Based upon the passage of 1 John 1:8-10, what is the result of confessing our sins? Is this a conditional or unconditional promise (v. 9)?

Confessing is not just speaking the words, but it is agreeing with God that what we have done is wrong. Practically speaking, what does it look like for you to confess your sins? How is it essential to your marriage?

According to verse 10, if we claim to be without sin, what is not in us? What are the implications of this verse for our lives?

Why do we often "hear" and not "do" when it comes to Scripture? What does this say about our faith?

In what area of your life could you do a better job applying God's Word rather than just listening to it?

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid 77

**2. The next step: As imitators of God we must learn that we can't stay in love without forgiveness.**

**Have a volunteer to read Ephesians 4:32: *Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.***

Every one of us has a heart prone to not forgive. We hold grudges, we build up offenses against other people, we sweep things under the rug, or we write people out of our lives forever. Rarely do we do the hard work of putting on real forgiveness, especially as a character trait that we try to model consistently.

Forgiving is literally “acting with grace,” and forgiving one another is certainly one of the best ways to extend undeserved favor. Paul pointed out specifically that this is a God-like quality. Because He forgave in Christ, we are to extend forgiveness to others. The more we reflect on and grow in our understanding of how much God loves us and how much He has forgiven us of, the more we want to treat others the same way.

**What forgiveness is not:**

- 1. Forgiveness is not the same as forbearance. However, Don't skip steps, if confrontation is needed. Matthew 18:15 (ESV)** <sup>15</sup> “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.
- 2. Forgiveness is not approval of what they did** – God never approved of our sin. Jesus forgave the woman found in adultery, but He did not approve of what she did. He told her, “Leave your life of sin.” (John 8:11)
- 3. Forgiveness is not excusing what they did** – Though explanations may account for someone's behavior, they should not excuse them.
- 4. Forgiveness is not pardoning what they did** – A pardon is a legal transaction that releases an offender from the consequences of their action such as a penalty or sentence. (An abusive spouse needs to be reported to the police.)
- 5. Forgiveness is not reconciliation** - Reconciliation implies restoration of friendship after a quarrel. When a husband and wife totally forgive each other, it will not always mean reconciliation. If your spouse is unfaithful and sleeps with your best friend, you may forgive and the bitterness and desire to punish the other person may be gone but it may never be the same.

**What Forgiveness is:**

1. **Forgiveness keeps no record of wrongs** - [1Co 13:4-5 HCSB] 4 Love is patient, love is kind. Love does not envy, is not boastful, is not conceited, 5 does not act improperly, is not selfish, is not provoked, and does not keep a record of wrongs.
2. **Forgiveness does not punish** – Many wives punish their husbands with silent treatment or withdrawing. Using sex, or lack thereof, as a form of punishment.
3. **Forgiveness is lovingly keeping silent** – Anyone who truly forgives does not gossip about his or her offender.
4. **Forgiveness is (in essence) not holding it against that person.**

What does the gospel teach us about the importance of forgiveness in the life of a Christian?

Why is forgiveness really a spiritual issue? What does our willingness or unwillingness to forgive reveal about our hearts?

How are compassion and forgiveness related? As your compassion for other people grows, how does your willingness and ability to forgive grow as well?

Sermon Notes:

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### 3. The final ingredient – Assuming the best

**Have a volunteer to read 1 Corinthians 13:7: *Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.***

We assume the best and know what our spouse will look like in the future. Endeavoring to see your spouse as beautiful is not naïve or over-romanticized it is brutally realistic. Keller: “I see all your flaws, imperfections, weaknesses, and dependencies but underneath them all I see growing the person God wants you to be.” ... The goal of the marriage is to see something absolutely ravishing that God is making of the beloved.

What do you think it means for love to bear and believe all things? What are some examples that you know of in your life where this kind of love has been modeled for you?

Love doesn't give up. One of the places we see this modeled in Scripture is in Jesus' parable of the prodigal son. Even though the father in the story's younger son treated him terribly, the father still saw the prodigal “while the son was still a long way off” and the father was “filled with compassion” (Luke 15:20). Love always sees and believes in the potential of others. Like the father of the prodigal, love gives us the strength to continue to believe in others when all hope seems lost.

What is it about love that can make us hopeful and give us endurance?

As Christians, love makes us hopeful and gives us endurance because we have experienced the transformative power of Christ's love. We know for certain that Christ's love for us has deeply and profoundly changed us, and we know that if this love can change us, then no one is beyond the reach of the love of God.

Sermon Notes:

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## **Application**

**How does denying or ignoring our sins harm us? More specifically, how does it harm our relationships?**

**How can you make confessing your sins a routine spiritual discipline? Share some ways this has (or hasn't) worked for you in the past as encouragement for one another.**

**Describe a time when you saw bitterness wreak havoc on you and a relationship in your life. What did you learn about the importance of forgiveness through that experience?**

**How might our marriages (or relationships) demonstrate an enduring love toward one another in tangible ways?**

**What is a way that you can hold up the ropes today for your marriage? What is a way that you can help another couple hold up the ropes in their marriage?**