



Lesson 1 Forgiveness!

Before beginning, the instructor may consider saying something like the following: Through these sessions, our prayer together is that you'll become more spiritually prepared to be married. However, it does occasionally happen that couples find out they aren't ready to be married yet . . . or even at all. It is much more likely that you will complete this course eager and ready to begin your life together. However, if the second scenario occurs, this can be blessing from God, too.

Saying this out loud at the beginning may help a couple to avoid an unwise marriage.

Introduction

Brainstorm. For what reasons might it sometimes be hard to forgive others? (Think of 2-3 reasons.)

The hurt is deep. It's hard to let go. Perhaps feel vulnerable if we forgive. Etc.

I. I need it!

Romans 3:9-20 NIV

What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. ¹⁰ As it is written:

⁹ "There is no one righteous, not even one;

*¹¹ there is no one who understands,
no one who seeks God.*

*¹² All have turned away,
they have together become worthless;
there is no one who does good,
not even one."*

*¹³ "Their throats are open graves;
their tongues practice deceit."*

"The poison of vipers is on their lips."

*¹⁴ "Their mouths are full of cursing and
bitterness."*

¹⁵ "Their feet are swift to shed blood;

¹⁶ ruin and misery mark their ways,

¹⁷ and the way of peace they do not know.”

¹⁸ “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. ²⁰ Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

1. The problem with ALL people is . . .

Sin.

2. Some specific sins of which God convicts all people (and therefore, sins for which God convicts me) are . . .

Not doing good, deceit, cursing and bitterness, etc.

3. Finish each of the following in 2-3 ways.

- As I consider marriage, it’s critical that I remember that I am a sinful human being, and I . . .

Answer will vary. Reminds me that I am often at fault, that I need to keep working on me, that I need to be humble, that I need God’s help, etc.

- As I consider marriage, it’s critical that I remember that my spouse is a sinful human being, and . . .

Answers will vary. A key one is so that I have reasonable expectations. My spouse is a sinner; (s)he will sin. No, they won’t try to sin (prayerfully), but they just will. I need to be prepared for that, be quick to forgive, etc.

II. I HAVE it!

Zechariah 3:1,3-5 NIV

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him.

³ Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. ⁴ The angel said to those who were standing before him, “Take off his filthy clothes.”

Then he said to Joshua, “See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich garments on you.”

⁵ Then I said, “Put a clean turban on his head.” So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him, while the angel of the LORD stood by.

1. “Satan” could be translated “accuser.” So, the accuser is accusing, and Joshua is guilty! Summarize—what did God do for Joshua?

Removed the “dirty clothes” and re clothed him in rich garments. (Removal of sin and crediting righteousness to him.)

2. Because God has done this also for me, now, in the eyes of God, I look . . .

Righteous! “Clothed in rich garments.”

3. Of course, that also impacts the way I look at my spouse. In what ways?

My spouse is righteous in God’s eyes, too, so I’ll want to treat my spouse consistently as someone who’s “right” in God’s eyes.

III. I embrace it!

Hebrews 10:16,17 NIV

“This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.”¹⁷ Then he adds: “Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.”

God’s promise concerning our sins is that . . . and so it’s important in marriage that each of us . . .

He remembers them no more. So, when we forgive, we are also to forget. Illustration: God’s forgiveness is like the sun; we are the moon. As God’s forgiveness shines on us, we are empowered to reflect it, but always less “brightly” than God’s perfect forgiveness.

A practical exercise. Have the husband and the wife turn toward each other. Have one of them say, “I’m sorry,” and have the other respond with either “I forgive you” or “You’re forgiven.” (Then have the other spouse do the same.) Too often we respond to “I’m sorry” with “don’t worry about it” or “it’s no big deal.” There’s power in the words “I forgive you” or “You’re forgiven.” (This is the ministry of the keys, used in very practical terms.)

Psalms 103:12 NIV

As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

God’s promise concerning our sins is that . . . and so it’s important in marriage that each of us . . .

He’s completely removed our sins from us. In marriage, each of us should see each other as having no sins attached.

Romans 5:8 NIV

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

God didn't first make us show love to him. Instead, he . . . and so it's important in marriage that each of us . . .

God loved us when we were unlovable. He was the instigator of forgiveness, earning it, and giving it. God wants each spouse to be the same. Don't wait for the spouse to ask for forgiveness; simply forgive!

2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV

"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."



Assignments:

1. Watch the three "Marriage Moments" episodes. (Links below.) Decide on 2-3 helpful thoughts; bring them to our next meeting.

The three videos are about forgiveness, in order to solidify what was studied "live."

- #15 - <https://vimeo.com/460291188>
- #16 - <https://vimeo.com/460294330>
- #64 - <https://vimeo.com/651730394>

2. Do the "family tree" assignment.

This assignment doesn't have to do with forgiveness. Instead, it takes a step forward to ask, "What are some possible obstacles to our marriage." A big blessing of this assignment is that the two of them learn a lot about each other's histories and talk to each other a lot.

Our Family Tree

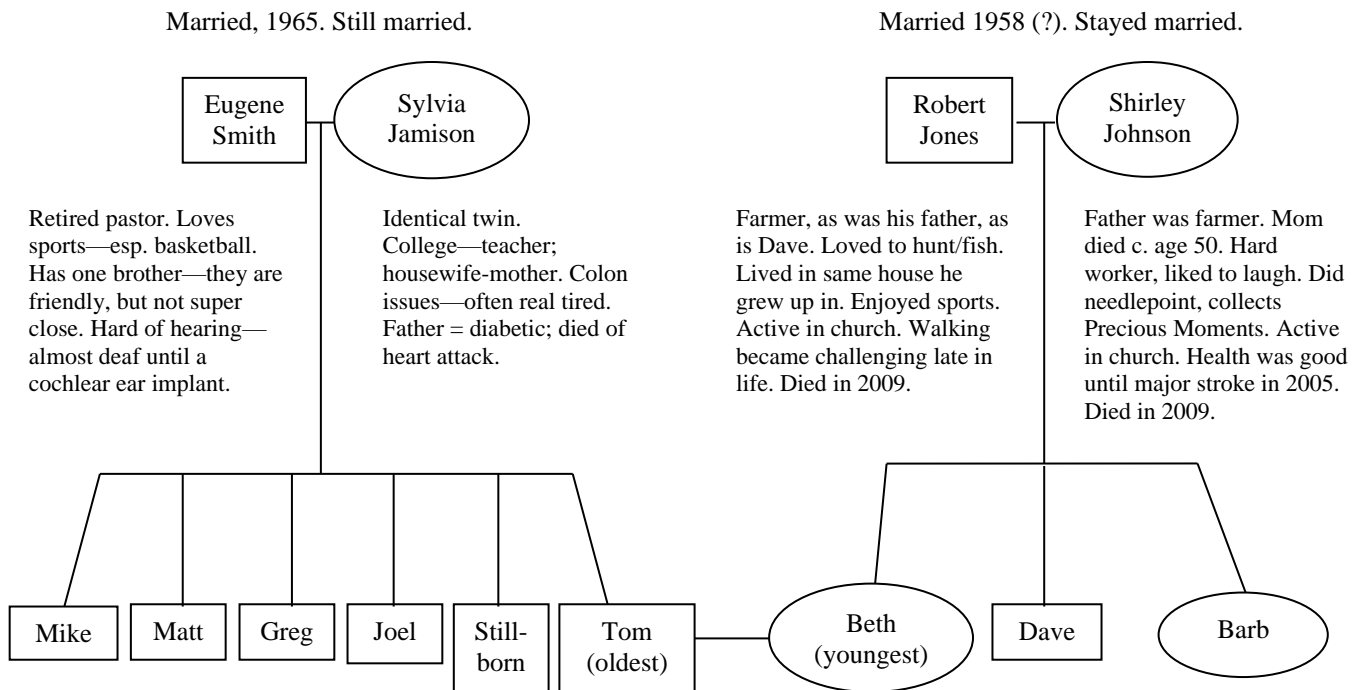
Five generations from now, it is likely that our life's accomplishments will be forgotten, and our descendants may know very little, if anything, about our lives. But the way we parent will most probably affect not only our children, but also our grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and the generations that follow. The frequently cited study dealing with the family trees of Jonathan Edwards and "Max Jukes" memorably offers powerful lessons about the legacy that we leave as fathers and mothers.

"As I understand it, the study began when the NY Prison Commission employed a Mr. Richard Dugdale in 1874 to visit state prisons. Dugdale was surprised to find criminals in several prisons who were not only related to other prisoners, but (as shown by further investigation) were all descended from the same family unit, that of "Max Jukes" (not his real name), born about 1720. The study was subsequently expanded (at Yale and Princeton) to include about 1,200 of Jukes descendants as well as the sharply contrasting family of Jonathan Edwards, who was born in 1703. Nearly 1,400 descendants of Jonathan and Sarah Edwards were charted. The findings confirm what sociologists have called the "five-generation rule:" how parents raise their child influences not only the child but the four generations that follow. In short, the Jukes family purportedly revealed 300 convicts, 27 murderers, 190 prostitutes, 509 alcoholics and drug addicts, etc., while the Edwards progeny had 430 ministers, 130 lawyers and judges, 99 college professors, 13 university presidents, 60 physicians, 11 congressmen and governors, etc." (From "Practical Insights into the Minister's Spiritual Growth," Prof. Forrest Bivens, p. 7).

In reality, that's no surprise. God said it this way: **"(The LORD) passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, 'The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.'"** (Exodus 34:6,7 NIV) God wasn't describing what he *wanted*; he was describing *reality*. If you rebel against God, it won't just affect you. It will almost undoubtedly affect several generations after you. The lesson is clear: the importance of spiritual values in the home dare not be taken lightly or underestimated.

Who we are—and therefore what sort of spouse we will be—has been greatly influenced by the generations that have come before us.

For next time, do a family tree, going as far back as you can. Show marriages, children of those marriages, divorces, etc. *For each person, describe as much about them as you know. Focus on medical problems, what their job/occupation was, hobbies, what their personalities were like, church, any stories you can remember (i.e., things that stick out, or times when they impacted you, or things that illustrate their personality.)* A very brief illustration is below.



From your family tree research, list at least one thing for each of the following:

1. Something I learned about my background in regard to marriage itself. (i.e., do I have a history of good examples? Poor examples? Some of each?)

The past influences people, whether we like it or not. If a couple has had a history of poor examples (i.e., lots of divorces in the family ranks), they will need to be extra vigilant about their spiritual health and guarding their marriage vows.

2. Something I learned about my background in regard to practical things. (i.e., are there health issues of which I and my spouse need to be aware? Are there certain interests or hobbies or occupations that tend to re-occur?)

This can be all over the place. Does one spouse’s family have a history of ... heart attacks in the later middle age (or whatever)? Are you willing to take on the reality that it could happen to your spouse? Is the spouse in “danger” willing to work to take steps to prevent it?

Note: We are neither questioning God nor being fatalistic. We're simply noting that God often allows similar health issues, etc., to take place in families.

3. At least one thing that will help our upcoming life as husband and wife.

Answers will vary. Some couples may struggle to answer this and #4. If so, I wouldn't push it, because often the answer is "embedded" in their answers to questions 1 and 2.

4. At least one possible challenge to our upcoming life as husband and wife.

Answers will vary.