

EP_87 Exploring_Forgiveness_Part_1_

Fri, Feb 28, 2025 06:57:48 26:05

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

forgiveness definition, lifelong process, quick forgiveness, trust and forgiveness, forgiveness myths, forgive and forget, emotional forgiveness, repentance required, therapeutic disclosure, acceptance hurdle, personal forgiveness, forgiveness benefits, forgiveness journey, forgiveness challenges, forgiveness support

SPEAKERS

Speaker 1, Speaker 2, Speaker 4, Speaker 3

Speaker 1 06:57:50

Music. Hi. I'm Pam Blizzard from recovered peace, and I'm Michelle Burke with hope redefine,

Speaker 2 06:57:55

and I'm Bonnie burns of strong wives. We're so glad you're joining us. Welcome to another episode of hope for wives. In our episode content, we have attempted to bring information that roughly follows a path through the three stages of healing according to the multi dimensional partner trauma model. The multi dimensional partner trauma model is the cornerstone of apps that's training, and we've had conversations already about first discovery and shock, and we've talked through the first stage of healing, which is safety and stability, then we have moved more into the second phase of healing, which is grief and mourning and other topics related to the second phase. So today we're tackling a sensitive subject, the F word and I mean forgiveness. So whether you stay in your marriage or decide it's safer for you to leave, forgiveness is something all betrayed wives consider. And of course, the eventual goal is sustainable forgiveness, and that's not something that comes about quickly. So ladies, for our first for our first question, let's talk about the definitions of forgiveness.

Speaker 3 06:59:10

The the Webster's dictionary has a definition of forgiveness, and it's a release from the legal penalties of an offense. It's not demanding reparation or payment for an offense.

Speaker 1 06:59:22

I think it is so important to define it, because there is so much misunderstanding and disagreement and it's so blurry and fuzzy and foggy about what this word actually means in

disagreement, and it's so blurry and fuzzy and foggy about what this word actually means in terms of in the context of betrayal in a close, intimate relationship, we've heard so much in culture, TV, movies, from the pulpit, from friends, from family, about forgiveness, the importance of it, how to do it, why you should do it. But I think most of all, we get a lot of pressure



07:00:10

to do it, and

S

Speaker 1 07:00:11

so I think it is vitally important to tease out the differences between what it is and what it is not.

S

Speaker 2 07:00:20

And I stumbled across this definition on the internet, but it says that forgiveness is a lifelong process that involves letting go of resentment and not seeking compensation for hurt or loss. And what I really like about that definition is that it's a lifelong process. It's not quick, and that's a lot of times. And we're going to get into this in our next question, as Pam was just alluding to some problems that were taught that from the pulpit sometimes quick forgiveness is what's preached, and that's not necessarily achievable. Doesn't mean you're a bad Christian if you can't forgive quickly. So let's, let's just go ahead and transition then into our next question, which is, what are some myths about forgiveness?

S

Speaker 3 07:01:15

Common myths I hear are that if you forgive me, then you should trust me, and that trust and forgiveness are equal. I also have heard a lot about forgiveness being a choice, which I do believe it's a choice, but it's interesting how it's presented, because it's someone else choosing for you to make the choice. They're usually saying, Well, it's a choice. I mean, you should just make that choice for yourself right now. And so it's oftentimes a forced presentation of make the choice and she loses choice, right? So those are two that I've encountered, yeah,

S

Speaker 1 07:01:55

and that's because it is a process. And so it may be framed that while you're choosing not to forgive just because you're not to the point yet in the journey, because it is, it's an onion that has has so many layers to peel, and just because you're not there yet, it doesn't mean you're choosing to not forgive, right? And

S

Speaker 2 07:02:20

along with kind of what you were saying. Michelle about trust. forgiveness doesn't equal trust.

and it doesn't equal reconciliation. It doesn't mean everything's okay between the two of us now, just because I don't want you to go to hell, and that's kind of where my forgiveness started, was that I didn't want Dave to go to hell for what he did. I didn't. I wasn't. I didn't need that kind. Vindication, and that's where my forgiveness started, is when I realized that I can forgive him, but it doesn't mean that everything's okay, and I've had clients tell me, but if I, if I forgive him, and I start to act like everything's if I'm regulated, is basically what she's saying, if I'm able to live in a regulated state, and there's not such an intensity of emotion around our interactions, he won't know that I'm still hurt. And forgiving doesn't mean you're not still hurt, right?

S

Speaker 1 07:03:22

And forgiving isn't something I mean, it is something you can give outwardly to another person, but ultimately, forgiveness is for me, it's something I do that benefits my heart, my soul, my psyche, my body. I'm the one that releases this toxic poison. And for me, just personally, when I was finally able to get there and you talked about releasing a debt, I didn't need the other person, because there's lots of people in my life that I've had to forgive without them asking for it, I release the other person from having to say or do something before I'll be healed, that I could let go of wanting them to acknowledge, make amends, say I'm sorry, I could let go of the need for that before I could move forward and heal and I could move past that. That was part of my ability to forgive

S

Speaker 3 07:04:33

a few others, I think Bonnie, going back to what you were, I think you were trying to articulate is that if I extend forgiveness to him, then it condones his past, present and future behaviors. In other words, everything's okay and it's not okay. The other thing that I know for myself was I would probably put myself in the category of being a fast Forgiver in the beginning. And part of what I know now about myself is the motivation behind being a fast Forgiver was not necessarily any condemnation or keeping myself safe. It was I thought if I forgave quickly, I would avoid deep pain, and it wouldn't hurt so bad if I could just get there really fast, right? Because that was presented as if, like it was the end goal. So I was like, sweet, I'm just gonna circumvent and go straight to forgiveness. And yet, on the backside of that, there wasn't a relief from the pain. It just was still very confusing. And then being told, will you forgive me? Like, why are you still bringing this up? Why are we still talking about this? We should, we should be moved on from this by now. So those are some of the myths, other myths, or challenges and lies that I've navigated myself.

S

Speaker 1 07:05:44

Yeah, you're talking about the myth of forgive and forget. Mm, hmm. We can forgive, but we are. It's just not in reality to forget and stuff that away. We I can forgive, but still remember everything that's happened. And even though I have forgiven, some of that pain is still there. And so we've we've got to do away with this phrase of forgive and forget. That's an unrealistic expectation. I can forgive my husband, and if forget means will you never bring it up again? No,

we're in a place where I can walk over to him seven times a day and talk about what happened years ago, and we need to be in this place where we can talk about it. He doesn't expect me to just forget it and never bring it up again. That's not what recovery means.

S

Speaker 3 07:06:40

Yeah, I have this really funny story that I'll share with you guys around the the argument against forgive and forget. Okay, when I was about 11 years old, I was on a road trip with some family members, and we got to this place, we were visiting people that I didn't really know, but they had grape Fanta, and I was so stoked about this great Fanta, right? So I'm about 11, and I end up consuming an excessive amount of great Fanta that day, right, right? You kind of probably know where this is going. As we began to drive home, I got car sick and began to vomit great Fanta all over this Toyota Camry. Oh, and it was excruciating. And to this day, I cannot drink or just about eat anything that is grape flavored, right, like but definitely no grape Fanta. That is not happening. And so the reason I bring that up is because I can make peace with grape. Fanta and forgive great Fanta for the way that it turned on me, right? But it would be ignorant of me to forget that impact and know that I don't like it like and so, so I, I always think about that when people talk about forgive and forget, that forgetting is a lack of wisdom, like we are gaining wisdom from remembering, from the remembrances, right? Even the Israelites did that. They created ebenezers as a sign of remembrance of the good things that God had done, the promises, but also the hardships, because that's what they were attempting to do, is to say, let's not go back and do that again. And so when you talk about forgive and forget, it's not it's not even accurate. It's not accurate to do that, and it's unwise. Now change that there, yeah, but there is a difference between remembrance and a consistent set of debt against a person. I forgave you, but you still owe me. That's different, because now I'm not really forgiving you, right? If I'm still living with a sense of power over you because of what you've done, there's still an imbalance in that relationship and forgiveness. You know, the definition I read was a release from the legal penalties of an offense. You know, when you're in the court of law and your debt is forgiven, it's forgiven, it's like wiped clean. There's nothing left for you to have to own a person or owe a person. And that's, I think, part of the challenge for us is betrayed partners as we're stepping into this space, and some of the first things that are said to us is extend forgiveness to him, like he doesn't know, or he didn't know, or maybe he did know. But in order for you guys to move forward, you're going to have to you wife are going to have to forgive, and it's an unfair expectation of an individual.

S

Speaker 1 07:09:47

So it is, it absolutely is it makes what we talked about other people thinking, well, it's just a choice. And then many times I know I and I hear from other wives that talk about talking, talking about it in terms like it's an emotion or a feeling. I just don't feel like I can forgive, but it really is a sort of a prefrontal cortex process too. Yes, there's heavy duty emotion involved, but because it is such a multi layered process and journey, it really requires a fully safe brain to walk through that journey and teasing out what it is and what it isn't and what does it mean, and envisioning what does it look like to live in forgiveness, and can I go there yet it's it's emotional, but it does require a Safe brain, and if you're still in that sort of phase one safety and stability phase, where you're not regulated on a consistent basis, I just don't have the brain power to work through that. So it's an additional pressure people are putting on me that I can't I just can't even process what that means, and it's just another, another pressure on me,

S

Speaker 4 07:11:19

and I feel bad because I can't forgive. I feel guilt it's not mine to carry.

S

Speaker 2 07:11:28

Yeah, another place where I'm not sure if it's a myth or it's just being uninformed, is that we can we can forgive. We can do that mental process and not have anything and not expect any action from the other person. And that's called a pardon. That's when that's just grace given, and it's a pardon, and we don't expect anything from that other person. Where I think we need to be fully informed is that God required repentance before he forgave. And so Second Chronicles 7:14 says, If my people who are called by my name humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear them from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land. And then second, Peter three says the Lord's not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness, he's patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but for everyone to come to repentance. So I think that's the struggle, is that you can give him a pardon if you choose to stay in that. Marriage, it's going to require a repentance for reconciliation to begin.

S

Speaker 1 07:12:54

So and so if that Repentance isn't there, that turning away from my sinful behaviors, my harmful and damaging behaviors harmful to myself and to everyone around me, we need to not just forgive and forget. We need to forgive and protect. We if you're in that place where you can forgiveness doesn't mean you don't protect yourself. Forgiveness doesn't mean you leave yourself wide open and vulnerable. If you can forgive, that's something you do for yourself that's good, but still continue to protect you. Don't have to forget. You can't forget. It's it's okay that you don't forget, and it's okay that you continue to protect yourself with boundaries.

S

Speaker 3 07:13:46

You know, I I just want to say this about women I have walked with, I don't know that I've actually encountered a woman who's been betrayed, who absolutely positively refuses to forgive. Quite honestly, the majority of the women I walk with, they know it because it's just part of their upbringing. It's a part of their language. They know that forgiveness has a level of freedom attached to it, and they're desperate to find that freedom. However, Pam, you kind of alluded to this or touched on this, when you are in an active state of trauma and you begin to speak to a woman, or this particular person is in an active state of trauma, and you begin to tell her that this is the thing she needs to do. What it tends to translate is there's a loss of empowerment for her, and there's an expectation that's put on her to do something that feels very foreign in the moment, because her brain is saying, You're in danger, you're in danger. So to forgiveness, feels vulnerable, and it's a complete counter of reality for her. The other thing I'll say is that, you know, I've had multiple conversations with, you know, church staff, leadership, pastors, etc, and the conversation, the thing that I always want to make sure that they understand is that forgiveness can feel nearly impossible without knowing the truth and being allowed to grieve that truth. Yes, she can say the words which Bonnie, I think we're

getting to that, that intellectual forgiveness, she can say the words, and her brain knows that she should probably do that, but for it to become a true, a true response and an emotional engagement of, yes, I am doing this, and I'm doing this by choice. Okay, because that's one of the things we get to do at the retreat with hope redefined, we have an entire session where what we're doing is we're saying, You're invited to forgive you get to do this because of what Jesus did on the cross for you. Yay. And some of us are like, big whoop, I don't want to. And I'm like, that's okay. But the reality is, is that for so many women who haven't gone through something like a retreat, they've never been given permission to grieve what they know. Many of them don't have any kind of disclosure or full information, so they're not even functioning from truth, right? She thinks she's forgiving him for looking at pornography, and then, in reality, she discovers a month later that he's been with prostitutes, and he's got all these other behaviors that are still unknown. And so you're just perpetuating this cycle, not you, but the cycle is being perpetuated. And so I just, I just want to say that out loud, like I think that there are so many women who long to know how to do this, and they're trying and yet, on the backside of it, when they're met with this resistance or expectation, either do it now or, Oh, I thought you did it, but you must have done it wrong, because you're still having emotions around this, right? There's always this consistent feeling of failure, and I'm not doing it right? Yeah. And so I just want to affirm women who are trying to get there like there's a lot of missing pieces for you, if this is very early in your journey where you still don't you've not grieved, you've grieved what's standing right in front of you, but you're still trying to discover that those deeper layers of impact that your brain is still swirling around, and it's going to come. It will come

S

Speaker 2 07:17:33

just to tag on to what you're saying Michelle, if, if you don't know the full scope of his behaviors, you don't know what you're forgiving, and that's why we all are advocates of full therapeutic disclosures. And full therapeutic disclosures are not just couch disclosures. I've recently had some clients who thought they had a full therapeutic disclosure. They're they're definite, or the information they had about what a full therapeutic disclosure is was inaccurate. So I just want to promote that right here. We have a whole episode on full therapeutic disclosure. Lachelle specializes in them, so we'll, we'll put those links in the show notes, because that full therapeutic disclosure is done in a regulated way with support people. So you will know what you're forgiving.

S

Speaker 1 07:18:26

I think there's so many hurdles we have to jump over before we can get there, and I want people to know that. I want everyone to know that it is a process. It takes time, but there's so many hurdles, and one of them is acceptance. That's a huge hurdle for us, in betrayal of even accepting the truth of what happened, even though all the facts were right in front of me, my mind could not wrap around the truth and the reality, and I think part of my brain was still trying to negotiate and bargain with a different Please, Give me a different understanding of everything that happened, and I can't really fully integrate it into my brain. And so acceptance of what really happened and acceptance of how I'm receiving it and how it's affecting me is was a necessary hurdle for me before I could forgive authentically, forgive





Speaker 3 07:19:36

the picture I use a lot when talking to groups and different things about forgiveness and experiences. Oftentimes, what we try to do, it's like, you've ever had a small baby and they put toys all over the bed, right? And there's, like, all these little things, these little, tiny toys all over the bed, and then you go and you throw this big blanket over it. And this is something my elementary kids would do, is they would tell me, it's clean, and you're like, actually, it's not clean, right? There's stuff all up underneath that blanket. But we attempt to do forgiveness like that. Often we will try to throw a blanket of forgiveness over the mess, and it's not really been dealt with. And so I invite clients, group members, retreat participants, any woman that I'm walking with to consider taking out each toy one at a time and discerning can I extend forgiveness for this? I may not be able to extend forgiveness for the entire thing, but can I give him? Can I release myself, right? Because it is a personal it is a personal experience, but can I extend forgiveness for this thing, this one object, this one chapter, this one story, in all of this, versus feeling like we have to throw that blanket over it and then just be done, because it's just not real and it's not sustainable. And so that's also why I find women feeling super confused, because they're like, I thought I forgave him for all this, but she's discovering the toys under the blanket, right? And she's like, wow, this is not cleaned up. What is the deal?



Speaker 1 07:21:09

Yeah, I love that imagery. Thank you for that. That's yeah,



Speaker 2 07:21:12

and to go along with that imagery and what you were saying, Pam, about acceptance is



07:21:21

for me,



Speaker 2 07:21:23

once I had all the information and the blanket had been pulled off and I had all the toys in front of me. It was, it was the, I'm gonna say, crazy. It's not the crazy as in, the most fragmented my brain had ever been. I had never experienced that inability to wrap my mind around something. And it took weeks and weeks and weeks of wrapping my mind around it. I know I told Michelle this, that this was the craziest I had ever felt, and I kind of value myself on being really strong and stable and intellectual and and I was a wreck, and so I understand why you want to keep the blanket. Yes, understand it. It is so hard, and when you have small children and you're trying to navigate life so difficult, so I just want to honor that difficulty while encouraging you to find support so you can navigate through the I mean, I would say almost psychosis. I mean, seriously, it was the craziest I ever felt. I'm not there anymore, thankfully, which was show. Can we take a vote? Michelle's the funny one. Michelle, oh,



07:22:55

(1)

07:22:55

you're the crazy one. Anyways, I

S

Speaker 2 07:23:01

just want to encourage you. You can do it, yeah, even though it's hard do

S

Speaker 3 07:23:12

Okay, so we're gonna push pause here for just a bit, and you can tune in to next week's episode to Hear the rest of this conversation. Thanks for listening. You.