

Anxiously Engaged

Supplemental Lesson

Forgiveness and Repentance

Introduction

In 2010, Professor Richard B. Miller gave a fantastic BYU devotional entitled (appropriately) “Repentance and Forgiveness in Marriage.” We think he says things as well as can be said. Therefore, together, please read, watch or listen to Professor Miller’s talk and then we will go through a couple of activities.

[Richard B. Miller, “Repentance and Forgiveness in Marriage” 2010](#)

Activity #1

Please discuss the following questions together

What are “repentance/forgiveness” patterns like in your family of origin?

- Do your family members tend to apologize to each other easily?
- Do your family members tend to hold grudges or forgive each other easily?

How do you feel that we as a couple do in apologizing/repenting and forgiving each other for the day-to-day blunders? How could we improve?

Activity 2: Practice apologizing

In his talk, Professor Miller talks about how to apologize. To summarize, our apologies should:

- Be sincere and heartfelt
- Take responsibility for our mistake or offense
- Avoid making excuses for our behavior
- Use complete sentences



Intentionally practicing how you apologize and ask forgiveness can help you establish good patterns early on in your marriage. Below are two hypothetical scenarios. Each of you take a scenario and, using the principles outlined above, practice making an apology to your partner. (Yes, this will feel a little silly.)

1. Imagine that this morning you were supposed to meet your partner for breakfast, and you were twenty minutes late—again.
2. Imagine that you said something unkind about your partner's sister.

How did it go? How did it feel (besides a little forced)? Does this feel similar to or different from how you have apologized in the past?

In addition, Professor Miller reminds us that repenting is more than just apologizing and asking forgiveness: “Besides a sincere apology, repentance includes striving to forsake our shortcomings and weaknesses. We strive to keep our promises to do the dishes. We focus on not being grumpy and not snapping at our spouse. We endeavor to become better listeners and less judgmental. As we continually repent, we constantly try to improve ourselves. We strive to overcome our weaknesses and develop more Christlike qualities. By doing so, we become a better person and a better spouse.”



So, in the examples above, it means we would not only apologize and seek forgiveness for being late and saying unkind things about a family member, we would strive to be more timely in the future and we might say specific kind things to counteract the unkind things we've said.

Activity 3: Practice forgiveness and letting go

Professor Miller said that “forgiveness washes away the hurts and emotional injuries that are inherent in being married to someone who is imperfect” and it prevents resentment from building up. We must learn to freely forgive and move on.

Each of you think of a small offense that your partner has done recently—maybe they have apologized for the offense or maybe they don't even know it bothered you. Now, write the offense down on a piece of paper and then rip it up, throw it away and commit to forgive and move on.

As a follow-up:

1. What does true repentance feel like? Look like?
2. What does true forgiveness feel like? Look like?

THE BOTTOM LINE

In our marriages, we should be quick to admit our mistakes and then apologize and ask forgiveness. In addition, we should avoid resentment by freely forgiving each other for the everyday offenses.