

Pastor David W. Loy
Colossians 3:13
Scorecards
Williams-McConnell Wedding/ August 18, 2007

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Have you ever met a couple with a score card? I'm not talking about the couple who golfs all the time and challenge one another to do better. I'm talking about the couple where she's got a scorecard in her head, and there's a little tally mark on it for every time she feels like her husband has hurt her or let her down, and he's got a scorecard in his head, and his scorecard is full of little tally marks too. Have you ever met a couple like that? I tell you what, if they are a little bit talkative, you can usually tell that they're keeping score, because she'll let you know (or let him know in your presence) everything he's done wrong, and he'll shoot back with the same. If you've been with a couple like that, you know it's not pleasant. If you've kept score yourself, then you know it's not pleasant. After all, when you're keeping score like that, you're always looking for the worst in your partner, always looking for them to let you down or disappoint you, always looking for your spouse is doing wrong. Pretty soon, your spouse will more than oblige you, helping to stack up the tally marks to the point where you wonder why you ever married in the first place. Not a nice place to be.

Paul wrote in Colossians 3:13, "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (ESV). In other words, don't keep score. Paul, of course, was writing to the Christian church in Colossae, but his advice

is equally valid for marriages. Forgiveness means erasing that little tally mark, or even refusing to make it in the first place. It means not holding against your spouse what you could hold against him or her. It means letting go of whatever happened, or at least not bringing it up again and again in order to humiliate your spouse or manipulate your spouse. “Forgive as the Lord forgave you” (Colossians 3:13 ESV).

Why would you do that? Why would you stop holding something against your spouse even though you have a right to? There are pragmatic reasons—important ones. After all, life lived with grudges can be a pretty miserable life. A marriage just won’t work well if you keep holding stuff against your spouse, and you’re probably committed to the marriage, and so you work on forgiving so that you can stay together. Of course, forgiveness is hard under those circumstances, because—well, because you’ve really been wronged. So where can you get the strength to forgive? “Forgive as the Lord forgave you,” Paul wrote. Here’s the rub, and here’s the hope. How has the Lord forgiven us? Unconditionally. Not because we deserve it—it wouldn’t be forgiveness then. Not because of some innate potential just waiting to be set free—no, we are by nature sinful and unclean. He forgives us simply because he chooses to, because he loves us. As the apostle John wrote, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16 ESV). Out of love God the Father sent his Son Jesus Christ to die on a cross for you, because you needed a savior. You needed someone to pay the price for your sins, because you are—well, you are a sinner. You’re not so perfect and righteous as you might want people to think you are, not so perfect and righteous as you’d like to think you are yourself. You are a sinner, deserving nothing but God’s eternal wrath, but instead he sent his Son to die and rise from the dead, and for the sake of this Son Jesus he forgives you. He is not keeping score. That is particularly important

today, because a period of sin has preceded this wedding. But the apostle John writes, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:8-9 ESV). He doesn’t bring your sins up again and again to humiliate you. He doesn’t hold his hands on his hips or wag his finger at you when once you have repented. Instead, he opens his arms to you and embraces you. He erases the scorecard. He forgives you.

And that is the source of true and lasting forgiveness in a marriage—understanding that you, too, are a sinner, that you too need to be forgiven. “Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you” (Colossians 3:13 ESV). Without forgiveness, marriage becomes an exercise in keeping score. But with forgiveness, and most especially with the forgiveness we have through our Savior Jesus, marriage becomes a life-long exercise in confessing sins to one another, erasing the little tally sheet at the end of each day, and living your life together as one team. Through Christ, you can stop keeping score.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.