Reconciliation in Your Marriage

from: firstthings.org

After Lori Kuebler filed for divorce, she began to think about her marriage to Mark.

“During this time, I realized two things about myself,” said Mrs. Kuebler. “First, I was being totally selfish. All of my thoughts were focused on me. Second, I realized that I really was not committed to our marriage. This brought me to the conclusion that if we were going to make the marriage work we both had to be totally committed to each other. Divorce would no longer be an option.

I had to humble myself and let go of my pride and realize that I made a commitment to God and this man and I didn’t want to take it lightly. Instead of focusing on the past, I needed to focus on the present and what our marriage had the potential to be. My next step would be to ask my husband to forgive me for leaving him.”

“Forgiveness is a key factor in the reconciliation process,” said Brad Rymer, Certified Marriage and Family Reconciler. “Forgiveness is giving up your desire to see that person punished. Unforgiveness is the poison we drink to hurt somebody else. Ultimately, it hurts the person who harbors the bitterness rather than the person it is aimed toward. Reconciliation on the other hand, replaces hostility and separation with peace and friendship. It is admitting failures and mistakes, and being willing to consider and offer change in attitudes and behaviors that contribute to conflict in a marriage.”

During the reconciliation process, the Kueblers learned that they had to be willing to look at their individual failures and mistakes in the relationship. Both of them had to be open to change.

“This process has been so amazing,” said Mrs. Kuebler. “We have learned a lot about ourselves and each other. Probably the most important insight has been that you can’t control another person. The only person you can control is yourself, so your focus has to be how you can improve the relationship. I finally recognized that Mark really wasn’t the problem. It was how we were handling things that caused the problem. Although we still had things to work out, our attitudes changed and that has made all the difference.”

“I think that couples should focus on attacking the problem not each other,” said Mr. Rymer. “Your goal should be to win the other person over, not win over them. The latter does not equal reconciliation, it just creates more hostility and separation.”

Couples who are looking for reconciliation in their relationship should consider the following steps.

* First, think about specific attitudes and behaviors you are doing that contribute to the conflict.
* Second, admit those attitudes and actions to your spouse at an appropriate time. This is not a talk you want to have when you are both tired and hungry.
* Step number three is to apologize. Dr. David Seamands, a well-known marriage counselor, says the twelve most important words in marriage are “I was wrong. I am sorry. Please forgive me. I love you.”
* Last, search for creative solutions that will improve your relationship. We generally try to solve the problem before we fully understand it – we get the tip of the iceberg and run with it. Try hard to understand the other person’s interest. At this point, listening becomes more important than speaking. Listen until each person feels understood. By doing this you stand a much greater chance of solving the problem and moving on.

“In order for a marriage to work you must communicate,” said Mrs. Kuebler. “You have to talk about the little things like leaving the cabinet door open so the little things don’t become big things. We still have problems to overcome, but there is a security in knowing that we are both in it for the long haul.”