



# How to Let Go of Resentment



## THE CHALLENGE

You cannot forget the bad things your spouse has said or done; the harsh words and thoughtless acts are indelibly etched in your memory. As a result, the affection you once had has been replaced by resentment. You have no choice, it seems, but to endure a loveless marriage. You resent your spouse for that too.

Be assured that things can improve. First, though, consider a few facts about resentment.

## WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

**Resentment can destroy a marriage.** Why? Because it undermines the very qualities upon which a marriage should be built, including love, trust, and loyalty. In a sense, then, resentment is not the *result* of a marital problem; it *is* a marital problem. For good reason, the Bible says: “Put away from yourselves every kind of malicious bitterness.”—Ephesians 4:31.

### **If you harbor resentment, you are hurting yourself.**

Harboring resentment is like slapping yourself and then expecting the *other* person to feel the pain. “The family member who is the focus of your resentment may be feeling just fine, enjoying life, and perhaps not at all troubled by any of this,” writes Mark Sichel in his book *Healing From Family Rifts*. The bottom line? “Resentment hurts you far more than the person you resent,” Sichel says.

**Resentment is a choice.** Some people might doubt that. They would say, ‘My spouse *made* me resentful.’ The problem is, such thinking puts the emphasis on something that cannot be controlled—the actions of another person. The Bible offers an alternative. It says: “Let each one examine *his own* actions.” (Galatians 6:4) We cannot control what someone else says or does, but we *can* control how we react to it. Resentment is not the only option.

▶ Holding on to resentment creates a burden that keeps your marriage from moving forward



## WHAT YOU CAN DO

**Take responsibility for your resentment.** Granted, it is easy to blame your spouse. But remember, resentment is a choice. So is forgiveness. You can choose to follow the Bible's admonition: "Do not let the sun set while you are still angry." (Ephesians 4:26) A spirit of forgiveness gives you an opportunity to approach your marriage problems with a better mind-set.—*Bible principle: Colossians 3:13.*

**Examine yourself honestly.** The Bible acknowledges that some people are "prone to anger" and "disposed to rage." (Proverbs 29:22) Does that describe you? Ask yourself: 'Am I inclined toward bitterness? How easily am I offended? Do I tend to make issues over minor matters?' The Bible says that "the one who keeps harping on a matter separates close friends." (Proverbs 17:9; Ecclesiastes 7:9) That can happen in a marriage as well. So if you have a tendency toward resentment, ask yourself, 'Could I be more patient with my spouse?' —*Bible principle: 1 Peter 4:8.*

**Decide what is truly important.** The Bible says that there is "a time to be silent and a time to speak." (Ecclesiastes 3:7) Not every offense needs to be discussed; sometimes you can simply "have your say in your heart, upon your bed, and keep silent." (Psalm 4:4) When you do need to discuss a grievance, wait until your irritation has passed. "When I feel hurt," says a wife named Beatriz, "I try to calm down first. Sometimes I later realize that the wrong was not that serious anyway, and then I'm more inclined to speak respectfully."—*Bible principle: Proverbs 19:11.*

**Understand the meaning of "forgive."** In the Bible, the word "forgive" is sometimes translated from an original-language word that suggests the idea of letting go of something. Therefore, to forgive does not require that you minimize the offense or act as if it never occurred; it could mean that you simply let it go, realizing that resentment can do more damage to your health and your marriage than the offense itself. ■

## KEY SCRIPTURES

"Continue putting up with one another and forgiving one another freely."—Colossians 3:13.

"Love covers a multitude of sins."  
—1 Peter 4:8.

"The insight of a man certainly slows down his anger, and it is beauty on his part to overlook an offense."—Proverbs 19:11.

## TRY THIS

For the next week, notice three positive traits in your spouse. Write them down at the end of the week, and tell your spouse why you appreciate those traits. Focusing on the positive will help you to fight off resentment.

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