

Pastor Mark: Howdy. Welcome back to episode number six in the Real Romance study in the Song of Songs. So to catch you up to speed in the previous section of the scriptures, they had a big fight. He was out all night. We don't know what he was doing, maybe working. She got a little frustrated, went to bed, locked the door. He came home, tried to knock on the door. Didn't work. Tried to pick the lock didn't work. Eventually, he left.

Grace Driscoll: Yep.

Pastor Mark: And they were unresolved. By the time we pick up the story this week, they have resolved their conflict. They have reconciled their relationship. They've restored their affection. And so what we want to talk about is repentance and forgiveness and how, when we're wrong, we need to own it. And when they're wrong, we need to forgive it. And Jesus died for it. So it's possible to get over it.

So why don't we just jump right into the scriptures? And then we're going to talk about how to work through issues in a way that is only possible for the Christian.

Grace Driscoll: Yes.

Pastor Mark: If Jesus didn't die for something, then we need to sort of punish one another or kill the marriage. If Jesus was punished and died, we don't need to punish each other and we don't need to kill the relationship, because Jesus already took care of it. So we'll start by, she speaks as is often the case, she speaks first. She speaks most. You can read what she has to say, and then I'll read what he has to say. Previously, she did all the talking because when they were fighting, he had left and now he returns, and they're going to have a conversation.

Grace Driscoll: She says in chapter 6, verse 2: "My beloved has gone down to his garden, to the beds of spices, to browse in the gardens and to gather lilies. I am my beloveds and my beloved is mine; he browses among the lilies."

Pastor Mark: So he's come home. He's back out in the garden. Life has returned to normal. And then he starts to compliment her.

Grace Driscoll: He remembers-

Pastor Mark: He remembers.

Grace Driscoll: ... how to get back in right strides.

Pastor Mark: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. When all else fails, say nice things. That's the moral of the story. "You are as beautiful as Tizrah, my darling." That was a beautiful city, probably a place that they liked to go and vacation-

Grace Driscoll: Yeah.

Pastor Mark: ... and get time. "Lovely as Jerusalem," which was the spiritual center as well, "As majestic as troops with banners. Turn your eyes from me; they overwhelm me." So they're doing the face to face and he's like, "I like this."

Grace Driscoll: Captivated by your eyes.

Pastor Mark: Yes. "Your hair is like a flock of goats to descending from Gilead." He keeps-

Grace Driscoll: He keeps talking about her-

Pastor Mark: ... talking about her long black hair. He's like, "I like that."

Grace Driscoll: She better not cut it.

Pastor Mark: But what he's doing here... I'm not even going to talk about that. So, what he's doing here, he's saying some of the same things that he said early in the relationship.

Grace Driscoll: Yep.

Pastor Mark: And the point is, in marriage, you can't just give a compliment and then assume that they're going to remember it for the rest of the marriage. You need to keep reminding.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah.

Pastor Mark: And so they keep making these deposits.

Grace Driscoll: Don't just assume that they remember the things you like about them.

Pastor Mark: Yeah. Because compliments are deposits. Criticisms are withdrawals.

Grace Driscoll: Yep.

Pastor Mark: And sometimes you bankrupt the relationship by having a lot more criticisms than you do compliments. So he goes on to say, "Your teeth are like a flock of sheep coming up from the washing. Each has its twin, not one of them is missing." He really likes her dental hygiene. He's just real big on that. You got all your teeth. Apparently in Israel, at that time, is sort of British dental work going on.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah. Yeah.

Pastor Mark: And he really appreciated her effort. "Your temples behind your veil are like the halves of a pomegranate." So she's got sort of nice cheeks that are all decorated up. She's cute as can be. "Sixty queens there may be, and eighty concubines and virgins beyond number, but my dove," and he keeps referring to her as a dove.

A dove is faithful to one mate for their whole life. And we tend to symbolize the dove with peace and purity. And so he calls her his dove, and it's good to have nicknames, guys. We tend to have nicknames for the people we love and hate the most. And he calls her my dove.

Grace Driscoll: My perfect one.

Pastor Mark: My perfect one.

Grace Driscoll: The flawless perfect synonyms. He's really going for it.

Pastor Mark: He's really going for it. Yeah. I think he may be looking at a goal. "My dove, my perfect one, is unique, the only daughter of her mother, the favorite of the one who bore her. The young women saw her and called her blessed; the queens and concubines praised her."

What he says is, "I think you're amazing. And so does everybody else."

Grace Driscoll: Yeah.

Pastor Mark: "You have extraordinary character and I'm blessed and honored to be with you. And I'm very attracted to you. I'm drawn toward you." He says all of that. And then she invites in, or he invites in the wise counselor.

Grace Driscoll: The friends.

Pastor Mark: The friends.

Grace Driscoll: "Who is it that appears like the dawn, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, majestic as the stars in procession?"

Pastor Mark: So they've worked out their conflict. They've resolved their issues. And we want to talk about a simple equation that repentance plus forgiveness equals relationship. There cannot be a relationship without repentance and forgiveness. And this starts with Jesus.

Grace Driscoll: Right.

Pastor Mark: Unless we repent of our sin and Jesus forgives us, we don't have a relationship with God. And we can't have a relationship with each other, unless the person who is wrong repents, and the person who is wronged forgives. So in a marriage, this is something you're going to need to learn to do.

Grace Driscoll: You do it your whole marriage. It's just practicing over and over and over. And the more you do it, the easier it is, because you build that trust with each other, that I see my flaws and my sins, and I'm going to acknowledge it and we're together, so we're going to work on it together. You're not going to remind me

or condemn me for it. We're going to forgive. But we're going to bring this out into the light and Jesus is going to help us with this.

Pastor Mark: Well, yeah, because it says in Corinthians that love doesn't keep a record of wrongs. And if you don't repent and forgive, you're literally keeping a record of wrong.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah.

Pastor Mark: And then every time you have a conflict, here's the latest thing on the list. And then what you do, you start at the top and then you revisit the list. Well-

Grace Driscoll: And even if you're passive aggressive in keeping that list internally, eventually it will seep out.

Pastor Mark: So let's talk first about repentance.

Grace Driscoll: Yep.

Pastor Mark: Repentance is the Holy Spirit convicting you, and then you agreeing with him, and saying things like, "I was wrong. It was my fault. I don't have an excuse." Because what we do when we don't repent, we blame shift, "Well, you made me angry."

Grace Driscoll: Right.

Pastor Mark: "You drive me crazy." It's blame shift. Or we make an excuse, "I was tired. I had a long day." Or we'll even get creative like, "It's my personality. I'm a J-E-R-K. That's just how I come out. So that's just the way I am." Or, "This is just who I am, and you need to accept me for who I am."

Grace Driscoll: Right.

Pastor Mark: We'll blame shift. We'll make excuses. We'll minimize. "It's not a big deal. You're overreacting. You shouldn't get so emotional. You've done worse things." Repentance is just literally-

Grace Driscoll: Owning it.

Pastor Mark: ... owning it. And it's not partial confession. It's not how can I admit enough that you'll just let it go. It's just being totally-

Grace Driscoll: I'm sorry, but you were mean to me too.

Pastor Mark: Yeah.

Grace Driscoll: That's partial.

Pastor Mark: That's partial. And so repentance is just owning it.

Grace Driscoll: Yep. We're all sinners. We all have sin to repent of. And marriage brings that out in us, because oftentimes we're different from each other. And so instead of allowing that to compliment the relationship, we allow it to divide if we aren't repenting and forgiving.

Pastor Mark: Why is it, do you think, so hard for a married couple, for one person to go first? Usually when there's a conflict in the marriage, it's like, well, as soon as they do their part, then I'll do my part. And we're both waiting for the other person to do their part. We want them to go first.

Grace Driscoll: Pride. Pride. We don't want to be wrong. We just need to deal with the fact that we are going to be wrong. And when we're repentant of that, there's so much freedom that comes with that. But we fear being vulnerable sometimes. And maybe we've had a bad response from our spouse when we have repented. And we need to talk about that as well. It's not an excuse to not repent. "Well he or she is going to come down on me or whatever. Be hard on me." Then you need to talk about it.

Pastor Mark: Yeah.

Grace Driscoll: Don't just keep avoiding repentance. You need to practice repentance. And so you got to learn how to do that in tandem.

Pastor Mark: Well, it says Romans that it's the kindness of God that leads us to repentance. If you know you're going to be forgiven, you're going to be far more likely to repent. That's why we can go to God and say, "I blew it." And he's like, "I know." That's why Jesus died. It was that big of a deal. But you know you're going to be forgiven, so it's a lot easier to own it.

Grace Driscoll: And it's an invitation for a relationship.

Pastor Mark: Yeah.

Grace Driscoll: I mean, just like God allowed us to be repentant to him and then enter into a relationship with him. It's the same way in marriage. And when I come to you saying, "I messed up, I was wrong. I'm sorry I hurt you." Your response isn't usually going to be, "Yeah, I know. And that was such a jerk thing to do to me." It's, "Thank you for acknowledging that, let's figure out how to do better next time."

Pastor Mark: And so the repentance is the person who is wrong, owning it. And then the forgiveness is the person who was wronged, dismissing it.

Grace Driscoll: Yes.

Pastor Mark: Letting it go. And so, when it comes to forgiveness, this is only possible in a Christian marriage. And this is the unique contribution that the Lord Jesus gives to marriage, that Jesus alone forgives. And so the story of the Bible is that Jesus lives without any sin. We all sin against him. He goes to the cross and he prays, "Father, forgive them."

Grace Driscoll: Yeah.

Pastor Mark: And then he dies to answer his own prayer. And the example there is sometimes to forgive people, you're going to need to just get crucified. You're going to need to endure and absorb some things that maybe are even wrong, because you love them and you want a relationship with them. So rather than punishing them, making them pay, there's a price that you end up paying. That's what Jesus Christ does for us.

And when he teaches on forgiveness, Jesus says it's 70 times seven, meaning it's part of life.

Grace Driscoll: Ongoing.

Pastor Mark: Ongoing. And he says it needs to be from the heart. Meaning it is at the depth of our being, it is letting it go. And it is acknowledging that Jesus already dealt with it and Jesus will deal with it, and I don't need to. One of my favorite scenes in the Bible is in Acts chapter 7. There is a guy named Stephen who's being stoned by the apostle Paul. He's being put to death. Saul is acting like a religious terrorist. He's really terrorizing God's people.

Grace Driscoll: Christians.

Pastor Mark: And as he's dying, Stephen prays Jesus' prayer, the same prayer that Jesus was dying. He says, "Father, forgive them." And then it says, "He saw Jesus standing in heaven." So he's on the earth, but he gets to appear into the unseen realm. And he saw Jesus standing. And all the other portraits of the Lord Jesus after his death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, he's seated on a throne. But when Stephen prays for forgiveness, he gets up and he cheers for him.

Grace Driscoll: That's a great picture.

Pastor Mark: And so Jesus, cheers for forgiveness in the same way that a fan cheers for a great moment for their sporting team.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah.

Pastor Mark: And if you want Jesus to get up and cheer, then pray to forgive people.

Grace Driscoll: I always say, we have to give an account, personally before the Lord someday. So whether or not the other person is repenting and doing the right thing, I have

to do the right thing. I have to obey God and repent and forgive. And sometimes there's marriages that are really hard. And the other side never does that-

Pastor Mark: Yeah.

Grace Driscoll: ... or rarely does that. But you, before the Lord, will have a clear conscience that you are obeying and doing that. And you'll experience peace and freedom-

Pastor Mark: And you're going to partake in the Holy Spirit.

Grace Driscoll: Exactly. God will honor that. It's really hard when the other person isn't willing to participate in that. But it doesn't mean that you don't have to.

Pastor Mark: Well, Master Paul says, "Insofar as possible with you, seek to live at peace."

Grace Driscoll: That's right.

Pastor Mark: And what that means is, when you're wrong, own it, when they're wrong, forgive it. It takes two to reconcile, but God's not going to hold you responsible for their part.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah.

Pastor Mark: You're responsible for your part. And so-

Grace Driscoll: And being an example to your spouse.

Pastor Mark: But see, we both struggle with this, because we're both justice people.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah.

Pastor Mark: We're both justice people. And so her name is Grace, but she reads the Old Testament and kind of likes it. But for both of us, it is literally saying, "You know what? I would rather have us win than me win."

Grace Driscoll: Yes, that's right.

Pastor Mark: And when the relationship loses, you're not winning.

Grace Driscoll: That's right.

Pastor Mark: And so let's talk a bit about forgiveness and why it is absolutely crucial and critical to the relationship. And early on in our marriage, there were some things that I held onto. I didn't forgive. I held a grudge. And when you feel offended or wrong, there's only two options. There's forgiveness and bitterness. And forgiveness is how you invite the Holy Spirit and the culture of heaven, because heaven is where everybody that's forgiven will be.

And when you choose bitterness, you're literally pulling hell up into the marriage-

Grace Driscoll: Yeah.

Pastor Mark: ... because hell is the place where all the unforgiveness happens and all the unforgiving people are. And there's a guy named Luskin, he's a researcher at the Stanford university. He runs something called The Forgiveness Project and he teaches a class on forgiveness. I don't get any indication that he's a Christian, but from just the medical standpoint, he looked at it and even those who are not Christians and don't understand the forgiveness that God gives, but they just try to practice forgiveness in their relationships. They live longer lives. They have lower rates of heart attacks-

Grace Driscoll: Wow.

Pastor Mark: ... intestinal ulcers, stress and anxiety, blood pressure. Literally unforgiveness, physically kills you.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah.

Pastor Mark: And couples-

Grace Driscoll: And we've seen that.

Pastor Mark: ... that live together in bitterness and unforgiveness, literally their soul's poison, their body's poison. And it just starts to literally overtake even their health and their wellbeing.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah.

Pastor Mark: And it destroys them. And sometimes people feel very bitter and they just sort of take that on as an identity. There is a gal in the book of Ruth, her name is Naomi, which means sweet or pleasant. And some things happen, and she's very frustrated. So she changes her legal name to Mara, which means bitter.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah.

Pastor Mark: And what she says is, "From this point on, I'm just going to be very bitter."

Grace Driscoll: Call me bitter.

Pastor Mark: But then God changes her heart.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah.

Pastor Mark: And by the end, she's blessed. And so-

Grace Driscoll: Which is a testimony to the fact that if you are bitter right now, against your spouse or anyone else, God can redeem that. He can change your identity to sweetness, back to sweetness, back to forgiveness, back to a healthy relationship.

Pastor Mark: And a lot of her bitterness was around her husband.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah.

Pastor Mark: He moved them to a foreign country away from God's people. The two sons marry unbelieving girls. And then the husband dies-

Grace Driscoll: They all die.

Pastor Mark: ... and the sons die, and she's broke, in a foreign country without God's people. Her husband made a series of catastrophic leadership-

Grace Driscoll: Yeah.

Pastor Mark: ... decisions that really caused significant pain. Then he dies and exits and leaves her to deal with it all.

Grace Driscoll: She's left with the burdens. Yep.

Pastor Mark: And not only was she bitter against her husband, she says, "The Lord has made me very bitter." She projects that on God.

Grace Driscoll: Yes.

Pastor Mark: And she's like, "God, you failed me. You gave me this husband. And now my life is very painful." And so God has to really bring her to the point where she forgives her husband. She doesn't need to forgive God, because God never sins against us-

Grace Driscoll: Right.

Pastor Mark: ... but she needs to trust God.

Grace Driscoll: And his plan was beautiful in the end.

Pastor Mark: And oftentimes that's what happens. The man will make bad leadership decisions that cause a lot of pain for the wife. But then the wife, rather than holding the husband responsible and accountable, she'll blame God.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah. Yeah.

Pastor Mark: And so the bitterness can overtake even your relationship with God. So let's deal with what is perhaps the most significant text on bitterness and forgiveness in the New Testament. And I'll have you read it, sweetheart. It's from Ephesians 4. And what's curious is it's written by Paul. So this is the guy who's murdering Stephen. Stephen prays for him. Jesus comes down and forgives him. And then Paul becomes the one who preaches and teaches about forgiveness.

Grace Driscoll: A lot of our New Testament is about Paul.

Pastor Mark: And so he's the guy who was prayed for, and God answered that prayer and forgave him. So he's got a lot to say about forgiveness.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah. Ephesians 4:26-27 and then 29-32: "Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil... Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."

Pastor Mark: So back to the story, the Song of Songs. He was selfish. She was selfish. He shows up and doesn't say, "I was wrong." He doesn't repent. She doesn't forgive him. Keeps the door locked. And so then their relationship breaks.

Grace Driscoll: The enemy gets in. It says do not let the devil have an opportunity. So right there, they gave the devil an opportunity in their marriage. So what do you do then?

Pastor Mark: Then you've got to repent and forgive, and then you can have a relationship. So by this section, they've worked through this process. Now they're back to face to face. He's talking about how much he likes looking at her-

Grace Driscoll: Compliments.

Pastor Mark: They're complimenting one another. They're encouraging one another. They're doing life together again. So it says, "Be angry, but do not sin." And what we tend to think of is that there's positive and negative emotions. There are not. There are positive and negative expressions of emotions. God gets angry. Jesus gets angry. So anger is not necessarily a sin. It depends on what you do with it.

Grace Driscoll: Right.

Pastor Mark: Your anger can lead you into sin. And so it says, "Be angry and do not sin. And don't let the sun go down on your anger." And in that day, when the sun there was no electricity, you'd go home. The day is over. What it's saying is deal with today's issues today. And Pastor Jimmy always says, not Pastor Jimmy, Evans

always says, "Today's anger is not a problem. Yesterday's anger is a problem today."

Grace Driscoll: Yep.

Pastor Mark: Meaning short accounts.

Grace Driscoll: Yep.

Pastor Mark: And what happens is, if you don't deal with it, it's like deferred maintenance on a house or a car. The longer you wait, the worse it gets.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah.

Pastor Mark: And a lot of people then reach a point in the marriage, they're like, "I'm not even going to work on it. We've let this go for so long, and it's such a mess that I can't even fathom putting in the amount of work it's going to take to fix it." Let me say, when the Holy Spirit shows up, he super naturally expedites the work. And so, it says don't grieve the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is there saying, "I will help you forgive. I will empower you to forgive. I can do a miracle in your relationship-

Grace Driscoll: That's right.

Pastor Mark: ... but you need to invite me in and surrender and submit to me."

Grace Driscoll: And we did this wrong for a lot of years. And we gave the enemy a foothold in our marriage through that. And we came to places where we thought, "I don't know if we can work this through," because it had piled up for so long. But then the Lord broke through and we were able to really truly forgive at a deep level, and offer forgiveness to each other and really start to work on the issues.

So it's never too late to work on this. And if you're sensing this right now, even the spirit is convicting you of this. You've got to start somewhere and God has freedom and forgiveness for you.

Pastor Mark: Well, and you talk about those seasons where we would just end up in a cul-de-sac. We'd be living life, and then some issue would come up-

Grace Driscoll: Yep.

Pastor Mark: ... and it would get us back into the thing that we hadn't resolved.

Grace Driscoll: Yep.

Pastor Mark: And we just drive around the cul-de-sac and it was-

Grace Driscoll: And we did shoulder to shoulder. So we just thought, "Oh, we're just going to keep going."

Pastor Mark: Stay busy.

Grace Driscoll: We did that really well. So there was fruit, but it wasn't the deep fruit of peace, and forgiveness, and repentance. And so for us, it wasn't until we kind of got stopped in our tracks to realize, "Okay, this isn't healthy. This isn't what God desires for us. And we're not enjoying it as much as we need to be." And so then he rescued us from that, some of the bitterness that had built up in us, and dug out that root of bitterness.

Pastor Mark: Well, and what bitter people become, they become archeologists. They're always digging up the past.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah.

Pastor Mark: And so you're hurt in the present and you know you're bitter when you're digging up the past. And so I would bring some things from the past. I'm difficult to argue with. I think well on my feet, I've got a good memory. And so if you keep a record of wrongs, literally what you're doing is you're an archeologist that's just digging up rocks from the past to throw at your spouse into the present and future. And you can justify it, say, "Well, it's all true." It's like, well, you know what is more true? Is that not only-

Grace Driscoll: Christ died for it.

Pastor Mark: Yeah. That Jesus died for it.

Grace Driscoll: Yes.

Pastor Mark: So I don't need to punish you and our marriage doesn't need to die. But what happens with people who are bitter, they also are very selfish. They're very aware of people's sin, but not their own. And they can justify their own behavior saying, "Well, because of what happened to me..." So then they tell their terrible tale, which is all the excuses, why they get to be ungodly, because some things were done to them that seemed to justify it. It never works that way.

So it says, "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouth."

Grace Driscoll: Yeah.

Pastor Mark: So if it's a painful issue or a difficult conversation, you need to really have the conversation with God-

Grace Driscoll: Yes.

Pastor Mark: ... before you have it with your spouse.

Grace Driscoll: Yes.

Pastor Mark: Silent solitude, prayer, fasting, journaling, wise counsel. "Okay, Lord. I need to talk to you and I need to process with you."

Grace Driscoll: Not blogging or social media.

Pastor Mark: Not blogging, not social media, not calling the in-laws and the out-laws. Not telling the kids.

Grace Driscoll: Right. Not venting at the spouse.

Pastor Mark: Yeah. And it's okay, now we're going to have the conversation, but I've already had the conversation with God. And then the corrupting talk doesn't come out of the mouth, because the Holy Spirit-

Grace Driscoll: That's right.

Pastor Mark: ... has put a bit in the mouth.

Grace Driscoll: Holy spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control. If that's not what's coming out of your mouth, then it's, chances are, corrupting talk.

Pastor Mark: Because if you are hurt and then you have a conversation in the flesh, it's only going to set the thing on fire.

Grace Driscoll: Yep.

Pastor Mark: It's not going to resolve it in any regard. And he says that the conversation should be to build up and benefit-

Grace Driscoll: Yeah.

Pastor Mark: ... the person you're speaking to.

Grace Driscoll: To give grace to those who hear.

Pastor Mark: So it's not, "Let me tell you what I feel. Let me tell you what you've done. Let me tell you how this works." It's like, what builds you up, not what breaks you down. What benefits you and unburdens you? What is not going to be burdensome to you? And so it is a back to that conversation we had a couple episodes ago. How in this conversation, can I serve you? Not be selfish, but to serve you. And you're doing that in the conversation.

Grace Driscoll: It takes a lot of practice. And this seems really ideal. And it is. And it's awesome to live in that, but you have to work at it. And if you're not in that place right now, it's going to take a lot of work to create new habits that are healthy.

Pastor Mark: And so he says, you're going to grieve the Holy Spirit. And you're going to give the devil a foothold.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah.

Pastor Mark: And I believe that demons transport in bitterness, the same way people transport in vehicles.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah.

Pastor Mark: You get in your car to go somewhere, as soon as you choose bitterness, a demon literally opens the door and says, "I'm going to come along for the ride."

Grace Driscoll: Yeah. Absolutely.

Pastor Mark: Because again, heaven is a culture of forgiveness and hell is a culture of unforgiveness. When we forgive, we're inviting the Holy Spirit to bring the culture of heaven into the marriage. When we're choosing bitterness, we're literally pulling the demonic and the culture of hell up into the marriage.

And the reason why some people even say like, "This marriage is hell." What you've just done-

Grace Driscoll: Absolutely.

Pastor Mark: ... is told us that-

Grace Driscoll: You're bitter.

Pastor Mark: ... there's bitterness, unforgiveness, and there's un-repentance, because that's the culture of hell. And so if you're pulling hell up into the marriage, yeah, the marriage is going to feel like hell. If you invite the Holy Spirit and the kingdom of heaven in, it's going to feel like heaven. And marriage is usually either heaven or hell. It's usually not somewhere in between.

Grace Driscoll: Right.

Pastor Mark: And so he goes on, he says, "The key is to get rid of all bitterness." And it says in Hebrews to dig up the root of bitterness.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah.

Pastor Mark: Think of it like weeds in your yard. If you just pull them up, but you don't get the weed, eventually it comes back-

Grace Driscoll: The root.

Pastor Mark: ... bigger and stronger. You've got to get to the root. And so it's ultimately getting with the Lord, or maybe even with wise council, Christian counselor and saying what's the root.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah.

Pastor Mark: And the root, sometimes isn't even with the spouse, it's in a prior relationship, or in a family of origin, or something was done before he even met the spouse.

Grace Driscoll: It's often the case. And then you're triggered by the next person instead of dealing with it at the root of the cause.

Pastor Mark: Yeah. Why am I so emotional? Why am I so overreacting?

Grace Driscoll: Yep.

Pastor Mark: Well, there's an unhealed hurt that is here before you arrived.

Grace Driscoll: It's deferred onto the person.

Pastor Mark: And now you just cut the old scar. And that means the root of bitterness may be way back earlier in life, which a lot of times people just think, "Well, we just need to move on." It's like, "Well, you better dig the root up."

Grace Driscoll: Yeah.

Pastor Mark: And then you can move on.

Grace Driscoll: Yep.

Pastor Mark: And he said, "If you don't do that wrath, you're going to get-

Grace Driscoll: It's quite a cycle there.

Pastor Mark: ... upset, anger. Now you're going to go next level. Clamor. Now it's spilling out of me.

Grace Driscoll: It's public.

Pastor Mark: Slander. Now you're telling the kids. You're on social media.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah.

Pastor Mark: You're blasting other people. You're creating an unholy alliance and then malice, meaning now you're capable of doing all kinds of horrible things.

Grace Driscoll: You don't care about whatever, the person.

Pastor Mark: It's a lose/lose. When you get to malice, it's like a suicide bomber.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah.

Pastor Mark: I'm going to put the vest on and blow you up. It's like, "Well, you know what? You're blowing yourself up." "I don't care, as long as I blow you up."

Grace Driscoll: Yeah.

Pastor Mark: Malice is a suicide bomber relationship.

Grace Driscoll: It's revenge.

Pastor Mark: It is vengeful. So he says the only way to dig out the root of bitterness is be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ, forgive you.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah. Love covers a multitude of sins.

Pastor Mark: And what he's saying is, the way Jesus treats you is the way you treat them. Because forgiveness is not just something that we receive, it's something that we also share.

Grace Driscoll: That's right.

Pastor Mark: And what happens is when we don't forgive, what we're saying is, "I can't forgive, because what you've done to me is worse than what I've done to God." Jesus can forgive me.

Grace Driscoll: Right.

Pastor Mark: But I can't forgive you.

Grace Driscoll: But the cross doesn't cover you.

Pastor Mark: And it's like, actually I think-

Grace Driscoll: That's right.

Pastor Mark: ... my sin against God was worse than your sin against me.

Grace Driscoll: Right. Right.

Pastor Mark: And so it is saying Jesus died, so there is justice. And Jesus forgives, so there is forgiveness. And so forgiveness has a lot more to do with your relationship with God than even your relationship with your spouse.

Grace Driscoll: It's very true. Yeah.

Pastor Mark: And so, but it's hard.

Grace Driscoll: It is hard, because hurt is in the way. And so you have to be willing to let God heal that hurt so that you can forgive.

Pastor Mark: And usually the deepest hurt is not because the offense was big, but because the person-

Grace Driscoll: Person you're close.

Pastor Mark: ... was big. So a stranger, or an enemy, could do something that is major, and 20 years later, you may not be thinking about it first thing when you brush your teeth every morning. But your spouse who is near and dear who you trust, they could do something that is comparably far less severe, but the consequences are far more painful because your expectations of them are much higher. And your love for them is much deeper.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah.

Pastor Mark: So we're most likely to struggle with bitterness, with the people that we love the most.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah, absolutely.

Pastor Mark: And then he has this verse in Hebrews, and to me, this is a pretty sobering, shocking, and somewhat scary verse on bitterness. And he looks at the flip side and he says, "If you choose bitterness instead of forgiveness, here's what happens."

Grace Driscoll: Hebrews 12:14-16: "Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no 'root of bitterness' springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; that no one is sexually immoral or unholy.

Pastor Mark: That's a-

Grace Driscoll: Yeah.

Pastor Mark: ... terrifying-

Grace Driscoll: Yeah.

Pastor Mark: ... truth.

Grace Driscoll: And the connection there is-

Pastor Mark: So what he says is if you don't dig up the root of bitterness, it comes back. It's like trying to remove the weeds from your yard without digging the roots out.

Grace Driscoll: Right.

Pastor Mark: That ultimately what happens then, others get defiled. So if there's bitterness in the marriage, how does it defile the kids?

Grace Driscoll: Well, it makes them toxic as well, because then they become spewing of... They don't understand forgiveness, so they're not going to forgive either. They're just going to become bitter like their parent.

Pastor Mark: So it's just a conflicted, divided waring family.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah. They pass on the legacy of bitterness.

Pastor Mark: And then the bitterness comes out of the parent and they're putting it into the child. So this might be mom or dad, "Let me tell you about your mom, your dad. Let me tell you what they did. Who they are. Don't marry somebody like them." All this it's cursing. And we tend to think of cursing is just saying bad words, which it can't include that. But it's literally putting a demonic curse.

Grace Driscoll: It's defiling.

Pastor Mark: It's cursing. It's putting a demonic curse over them. And that is, don't forgive, don't get married, don't honor your mom or dad, don't have any hope, don't be-

Grace Driscoll: All men are bad.

Pastor Mark: All men are bad. All women are evil. Your mom, your dad, they're evil. You can't trust them. You shouldn't be close to them. And then what happens is the kids they get defiled, meaning it's almost like a very highly contagious disease that then infects everyone in the family.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah.

Pastor Mark: And they're all sick and toxic.

Grace Driscoll: The sins of the father passed down.

Pastor Mark: And then the kids start ranting against the parents, and it's total dishonor and disrespect. And this can go into generations and it is giving them a model of marriage. So then they get married and they're going to do to their spouse,

what their parents did to one another. And then they're going to put their kids in the fight. This is where you get generational curses.

One bitter couple, all of a sudden, there's five generations of broken families and bitter marriages say, where did that start? Well, just train up a child in the way they should go, and when they're older, they won't depart from it. The same is true in training up a child in the way they shouldn't go.

Grace Driscoll: Right. Yeah.

Pastor Mark: You're discipling your family and your kids for generations either positively or negatively.

Grace Driscoll: And I've literally had women ask me, how do I not be like my mom in my marriage? And I tell them, first, you need to forgive your mom. And then you need to do the strive for peace and not let any bitterness grow up in your marriage, because you will be a griper, nagger, complainer if you allow that to grow up, like your mom potentially did. But you have to forgive first.

Pastor Mark: And bitter men, they get grumpy, they get angry, they get domineering, they get controlling. They're very punitive. They're very threatening. And then they withdraw. And so to get any affection or communication, the wife has to sort of earn it-

Grace Driscoll: Yeah.

Pastor Mark: ... in a performance relationship-

Grace Driscoll: Yeah.

Pastor Mark: ... that's not grace based. And it's a horrible place to live. And then he says, if we don't dig up the root of bitterness, he says that it leads to sexual immorality and unholiness. Most adultery in marriage is the result of bitterness.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah.

Pastor Mark: And most adultery, whether it's emotional infidelity, it's a work spouse, or it's physical infidelity. It is the result, not of a sexual problem, but a bitterness problem. And what happens when you get bitter, you feel like I deserve better.

Grace Driscoll: Right.

Pastor Mark: So you go outside of the marriage.

Grace Driscoll: Right.

Pastor Mark: Or you feel like you owe me. So you go outside of the marriage. Or you feel like God let me down. Therefore, he owes me. And for a lot of people, the marriage dissolves because of the sexual sin and the adultery. But the precedent for that was the bitterness. If you dig up the bitterness, you're friends, you do life together. You invite the Holy Spirit. You don't give the devil a foothold.

Grace Driscoll: You're connected.

Pastor Mark: You're connected as one. And as a result that safeguards and protects the marriage from emotional and or physical temptation toward adultery.

Grace Driscoll: Yep. Absolutely.

Pastor Mark: And most Christian families, they don't intend, I don't think, in most Christian marriages to just completely self destruct.

Grace Driscoll: Right. But they didn't have a plan not to.

Pastor Mark: But if you don't forgive and you don't repent, you can't have a relationship.

Grace Driscoll: He's literally giving us the keys here and we need to practice that.

Pastor Mark: So why don't you tell him what the homework assignment is for this session?

Grace Driscoll: It is in a private conversation with your phones off-

Pastor Mark: You'll see it [inaudible 00:33:27], here. Yes.

Grace Driscoll: ... looking at one another.

Pastor Mark: Yes.

Grace Driscoll: With lots of love and grace, have a healthy conversation, taking turns. Okay. So that's serving one another, back to the previous lesson. Take turns owning, fully owning, not excusing.

Pastor Mark: And I will add here too, since the husband is the head of the family, doesn't say he should be. So the question is not, is the man the head?

Grace Driscoll: Right

Pastor Mark: The question is, is he a good or bad head?

Grace Driscoll: Right.

Pastor Mark: So since men, you're the leader, you lead by repenting first.

Grace Driscoll: That's good.

Pastor Mark: Okay. Don't look at your wife and say, "Yeah, tell all-

Grace Driscoll: You can start. Tell me all your bad things.

Pastor Mark: "Baby, go first. I'm going to order something eat. And I'll sit here and chew while you just own everything." Yeah.

Grace Driscoll: Yes.

Pastor Mark: Husband, you go first.

Grace Driscoll: So husband, go first and repenting of sins against one another. Forgive one another from the heart, and pray for one another without getting angry or having an argument, so you can dig up your root of bitterness once and for all.

Pastor Mark: And if you will do this, this will literally change your soul.

Grace Driscoll: Yep.

Pastor Mark: It'll heal your body. It'll reconcile your relationship. It'll cause you to be closer to God, and it could save generations of your family.

Grace Driscoll: Yeah.