

# Repentance:

## The act of sincerely apologizing for one's actions or words.



People often talk about forgiveness in marriage - the need for husbands and wife to be good *forgivers*. But what about the need for repentance? The need for us as people prone to sin against the person we love most to turn from our sin and genuinely and humbly apologize - taking responsibility for our sin against our spouse? I think too little is said about *this* aspect of the marriage relationship. Jesus told people to repent, to turn from their sin and said, "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." (Luke 5:32) As one person has said, Christians are called to be experts in repentance.

The act of sincerely apologizing for our actions or words first involves taking *responsibility* for those actions or words. It is not justifying, defending, or minimizing the wrong we have done to our spouse. Our wrong may something minor like stepping on their toe; just because we didn't mean to, doesn't mean it didn't hurt them. We acknowledge the offense; "hey, I stepped on your toe, I am sorry, are you OK?" Yet, too often we expect our spouse to just get over it. That can extend into areas of greater hurt and pain; breaking trust or saying something very hurtful. It may take longer to repair the breach in the relationship in these instances and can begin when their is repentance.

I have to confess that this has been something very difficult for me. I didn't deal with hurt well earlier in our marriage. I would tell my wife "sorry" for some wrong she confronted me with and when she didn't let it go right away, I would get angry and say, "I told you I was sorry, what else do you want from me!" Well, *repentance* would have been nice! I could have *validated* her feelings, acknowledged the hurt and the genuinely said I was sorry, instead using "I'm sorry to get her off my back. This may seem monumental to address every hurt we cause each other and we have people in counseling tell us that they shouldn't have to stop and deal with all the little hurts caused each day. Folks, those *little* hurts cause damage and over time, it can build into something huge! And yes, it does seem monumental at first, but once we are in the habit of repentance and addressing hurts in a healthy way, it gets much easier.

Today, it is much easier to address the hurts I cause my wife - and her with me - because we have integrated a healthy repentance into our daily lives. We challenge you to do the work to make repentance an integral part of your marriage relationship also. If you, like I was, have problems responding to the hurt of your spouse in healthy ways, get help! See a pastor, counselor, or mature Christian who can help you or contact us. Couples in growing, mature marriages take responsibility for their actions and words, even if they don't think they were hurtful. If you spouse is hurt, humble yourself and address that hurt in a healthy way - be willing to *repent*!

**Helpful Resources:** *Fortified Marriages Resource page:* [www.fortifiedmarriages.com](http://www.fortifiedmarriages.com)

**Articles to Check Out:**

*The Key to a Strong Marriage: Humble Repentance* by Owen Strachan - [Crosswalk.com](http://Crosswalk.com)

*Real Repentance* by Gary Thomas - [garythomas.com](http://garythomas.com)