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FORGIVENESS

By Elise L. Moore

One of the most welcome elements in marriage is forgiveness. Even in the best of relationships, words are spoken or actions left undone that hurt the other's feelings. Sometimes we realize what we've done. Sometimes we don't. We have to forgive ourselves for making a mistake and not carry around a lot of mental baggage. And what a blessing it is to our spouse when we let go of hurt feelings and so totally forgive that the incident is forgotten.

When we were first married, I was overly critical of myself. If a decision proved to be less than successful, I berated myself. If I were truly listening to God, I thought, wouldn't I have known better?

My dear husband's frequent response was "Stop beating yourself up!" To me, that implied that he had forgiven me, so why was I holding on to the mistake? His readiness to forgive helped me see the importance of good motives. If my desire was to do and to say the right thing, he was willing to overlook mishaps. His consistent forgiveness made me love and appreciate him even more!

Likewise, I am striving to forgive more quickly. When two people sincerely endeavor to put God first and to follow God's guidance rather than personal opinion, there is nothing to be gained by ruminating over past mistakes. Progress comes from letting go and moving on.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus reiterates the importance of forgiveness, a point included in the Lord's Prayer. He counsels, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you" (Matt. 6:14). The Greek word for "forgive" means to let go, and "trespass" means side-slip, unintentional error as well as willful transgression. Thinking of another's errors as side-slips and being willing to let them go, help keep a marriage fresh and new. We start with a fresh slate each day. What a blessing this is to both partners.