

GROWING IN FAMILY TOGETHER (GIFT)

Letter for Husband and Wife



SECOND LETTER TO THE FAMILY- THE STRENGTH OF FORGIVENESS

by Pastor Thomas and Ma'am Pamela Teh

Dear Family,

We have been married for 44 years. This year will be our 45th year and it is truly by God's grace we are still together. There have been many moments in our lives when we thought it was very difficult to keep going. There were also times when one of us thought to ourselves - "I've had enough." Do you have times like these? What we have experienced, I would imagine, is similar to what many couples go through. But what really made the difference in our marriage is how we chose to respond to those same experiences all married couples face.

Simply put, when there is rain or storm, everyone is affected. Some would be totally drenched, while others would just get a little wet. There are those who would find joy in the moment and break into a dance in the rain while others would be grumbling and showing displeasure. Which group we belong to depends on the following:

I. PREPARATION: In our growing up years, our parents taught us how to forecast the possibility of rain by observing the sky. They also told us to carry a small umbrella in our bag whenever we stepped out of the house. Adding to these lessons, today, we also check the weather forecast on our smart phones a day or two in advance.

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In the same way, marriage requires preparation and in many ways, a change of mindset. We can no longer think of just the “I”, but need to learn to think of the “We”. My wife and I have learnt over the years, that the best preparation is found in the Bible. If we are able to ground our value system in His Word, many of our conflicts will no longer exist for we will not give anger and bitterness a place to grow and fester in our hearts. Furthermore, we will be more equipped to manage and find solutions to our challenges. God created us. He knows the problems we would face. In His gracious and loving way, He has planted the answers in His Word. The Word prepares and equips us. Do not neglect the beauty and wisdom of the Bible.

2. PURITY: Looking back, we realized that, in our growing up years, we often do and seek things for our own benefit. We learnt that what we say, do and how we respond to situations can also hurt or help others. God knows this and it is not surprising that He said, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” Jeremiah 17:9. The desire to keep our hearts pure, when an offence occurs, is to refrain from attacking our spouses with harsh words and a scornful attitude, but to replace that instead with our loving acts. This is the best way to overcome any unpleasant encounters. Truly, it is because of God’s grace that we do not get what we deserve (punishment and condemnation) and instead get what we do not deserve (forgiveness and blessings).

I mentioned Luke 23:34 in my previous letter. I would like to bring up some details that led to Jesus making this comment. A series of painful events took place before His death on the cross. He was imprisoned, mocked, lashed, crowned with thorns, nailed, speared, treated harshly and humiliated. He could have called upon His angels to destroy His “enemies”, to eliminate them with just a word from Him or a blink of His eye. He was accused not for doing evil but for doing good - healing, providing, loving and caring for people. Christ is fully justified to put right the wrongs. Instead the words that came out of this mouth were, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do...” followed by His act of giving His life for mankind. This one statement and one act showed the true strength of a leader. He did nothing to show His might in commanding an army, ruling a kingdom or having mastery over His twelve apostles, but instead showed the act of ultimate strength - His willingness to sacrifice Himself for His people.

Does having great wealth, many children, a string of titles and high positions in an organization equate to great leadership? As far as God is concerned, true leadership is within the individual - his ability to exercise grace, to forgive and to love.

SUMMARY:

Husband-master your strength to show how you can forgive, persevere and be humble. Follow Christ’s example.

Wife-your strength (which is meekness under control) comes in the way you submit to your husband. One excellent guide is by asking yourself this question: Am I speaking to and respecting my husband in the same way that I would to a leader in my place of work?

Storms may continue to appear in our lives. Sometimes we create them and other times they are created by our family members. Respond to them correctly.

HELPING EACH OTHER: Share with a few families (audio or video call) more on these areas:

1. Was Christ foolish to forgive the people for all they had done to Him? Why “yes” or why “no”? Explain.
2. Christ did no wrong. Yet He was accused, made to suffer and was crucified for man’s sin. On the cross, He set a great example on forgiveness. Will you be an example for your family and others to emulate? Share some testimonies in your home when you have the opportunity to show forgiveness:

Men: Be true leaders in your families and churches.

Ladies: Fulfill your greatest role in life – A “helpmeet” to your husbands.

By His Grace,

Pastor Thomas & Ma'am Pamela Teh