

Marriage as forgiveness school

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I think that Martin Luther should have kept marriage as a sacrament. Why?

Nothing has ever helped me understand the nature of God's love better than my marriage (except, perhaps, the love of my parents for me). I am always amazed and grateful when my husband forgives me for the boneheaded things I do. I'm even more amazed that he's often forgiving me for making the same mistakes again and again.

These are not major mistakes. I don't go out and cheat on him, for example. But I'm often irritated and grumpy, and I lash out, and I realize I've been a jerk, so I apologize and ask for forgiveness. And he kisses me and says, "Don't worry about it." And again and again, I feel blessed with a kind of marital grace.

And of course, I do the same for him. And in this daily practice of love and forgiveness, I come to understand God's love for me—and I am able to carry a similar love out into the world.

Lately, I've thought about marriage as [a sacrament](#) that helps me understand not only how I am forgiven by God, but how I should forgive others. In that list, I do include God.

I realize how arrogant this sounds: who am I to forgive God?

And yet, lately I find myself angry with God. I find myself thinking, Who sets up a creation that works this way?

And yes, I know that some people will gasp at my great hubris. But I suspect that anyone who has watched a loved one suffer and die from a horrible cancer will understand my anger.

Unlike some of my friends, I haven't found my faith shaken by huge events like the Holocaust or terrorist attacks. But watching cancers consume bright and talented people who were still young? It hasn't shaken my faith, but it has made me ask the

sorts of questions that I haven't entertained since adolescence.

So here is where I'm grateful for marriage and for larger family life. I have learned to forgive things I do not fully understand. I have learned that even great pain can be transformed so that we grow and become better humans than we would have otherwise. I have learned that my needs are not the only needs. I have learned to trust that all will be well—eventually.

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