

Stop Doing This and Every Family Relationship You Have Will Improve

YOU LOVE DOING IT AND SO DO I

We love it because it's easy, feels good, and comes soooo naturally. It's so natural we don't think we have a choice, like breathing.

But when others do it, we're convinced they DO have a choice. And it bugs us that they choose to still do it.

What is this cursed obstacle to family harmony—the one single thing that, if changed, could have the biggest effect on a family's ability to get along?

HERE IT IS: KEEPING SCORE

Which leads to bitterness.

Which leads to more scorekeeping.



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When we see a news story about a family member who attacks another family member over the TV remote or macaroni and cheese, we all know it's not about the remote or the mac and cheese. It's about everything that's happened before that.

Those things add up because we keep score. We think we are more hurt, more offended, and more wrongly accused than the other person.

Of course most of us don't end up attacking each other. But the results can still be painful.

IF YOU WANTED TO DISRUPT FAMILY PEACE, YOU'D INVENT KEEPING SCORE

It's especially harmful when more than one person keeps score, and that's usually the case. We each keep track of wrongs against us and feel that others owe us something.

If this goes on for years, we can end up accumulating enough to hate each other.



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No one keeps score of how many times they've been wrong themselves or offended someone else. We only keep score when others wrong us.

HERE'S WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I KEEP SCORE

When I think you owe me more than I owe you, I can feel resentment toward you. I don't want to call it a grudge, but that's what it is. I have a big chip on my shoulder. But I handle it like I think a Christian should, which to me means being nice on the outside and not overtly paying you back what I think you deserve.

My heart is cool toward you.

I suspect a negative motive in almost everything you do and say.

I don't trust you.

I hardly ever ask you a personal or caring question.

THEN THERE'S THE KICKER I NEVER THINK ABOUT BECAUSE OF COURSE IT'S SO IMPOSSIBLE . . .



... YOU CAN FEEL THE SAME WAY TOWARD ME

But I can't possibly comprehend that you could feel the same toward me. The bitterness? The chip on your shoulder? The cool heart? The martyrdom of smiling on the outside? The sweetness of being owed big time? All that goes both ways?

That is outrageous and maddening to me. And I am even more offended. How dare you think it's me! Sure, I hold some blame, but nothing like you. No way. Ridiculous.

YOU CAN BECOME THE ONE I HARDLY TALK ABOUT.

AS IF YOU'RE MY NEMESIS.

AND I CAN BECOME YOURS. YIKES!

WE EACH PICK THE GAME WE WANT TO SCORE

A problem with scorekeeping is we don't keep track of the same score. I don't keep score of the game where Brenda folds my t-shirts or makes breakfast or endures my procrastination.

I don't keep score of the times when I'm totally convinced I'm right and we argue about it and then later it turns out I'm wrong.

AND WE DON'T HAVE TO WRITE ANYTHING DOWN

Because we keep score automatically – in our soul. We all do. And that's the problem.

EVERYONE THINKS THEY WIN

I keep score of the things where I win and you keep score of the things where you win. So each of us thinks we're the winner and the other person is the loser. Since we disagree, we argue about it and I try to prove you're wrong, and you do the same with me.

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You can keep score in marriage and you may win, but your marriage will lose.

You can keep score with your kids, your parents, your brothers and sisters, and all the family you see at gatherings, holidays, and vacations. And you can win at whatever score you keep. But your family will lose.

SO NOW WHAT? HOW DOES SOMEONE STOP KEEPING SCORE?

Where's the button?

There's no button. It's a journey, just like feeling a certain way about someone has been a journey. I think the beginning of the journey to NOT keeping score looks something like this . . .

TWO THINGS TO DO INSTEAD

One of these is a method. The other is a mindset. Just FYI, mindset adjustments usually last longer; sometimes permanently.



A METHOD WE COULD TRY:

Since we love to keep score so much, there's ANOTHER score we could keep.

It's not easy, it doesn't feel good, and it doesn't come naturally. But keeping score of this will result in a softening attitude and increasing grace.

The score to keep?

WE COULD KEEP SCORE OF THE DEBT OF LOVE WE OWE

We do it one person at a time, even if we've been keeping score of a group that we feel is wronging us. Instead of scoring someone's negative, score their positive. And write it down - this is list #1:

- What are their good points?
- What do you admire and appreciate about them?
- What have they done for you?
- How have they helped you?
- How have they made your life better?

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This is not to deny any negatives or harm we feel from them, but we've already kept track of that. This is different.

THEN TO CONTINUE THIS METHOD, WE COULD GET REALLY RADICAL:

We could take God's view and look at ourselves the same way we look at that family member. List what God sees in us that he could keep score of.

- Our faith?
- Impatience?
- Anger?
- Treatment of people?
- Negative attitude?

If God kept score of our attitude and the way we treat others and Him - and he used the same criteria we use with others - what would be on his list of our wrongs and offenses? Write it down - this is list #2

THEN EVERY TIME WE FEEL DISSED, HURT, LEFT OUT, OR INSULTED, AND WANT TO KEEP SCORE:

We look at our two lists. Ouch.



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Using this method will slow down our urge to keep score.

It can keep us from being hurt as much and from having as strong a negative attitude.

Slowly, grace will work in our heart. That's the way we're designed to change.

**"TO BE A CHRISTIAN MEANS TO FORGIVE THE
INEXCUSABLE, BECAUSE GOD HAS FORGIVEN THE
INEXCUSABLE IN YOU"**

C. S. Lewis

Finally, instead of keeping score there's a mindset we could adopt -



A MINDSET WE COULD ADOPT:

In this mindset we decide that scorekeeping is a barometer of our relationship with God. So instead of focusing on the other person, we focus on us and God.

What does that barometer reveal? Whatever it is, let it influence a new mindset. Then let the mindset work in our hearts over time.

"WALK BY THE SPIRIT ... KEEP IN STEP WITH THE SPIRIT" - Galatians 5

If we're doing that and trusting God, are we going to keep track of how someone has hurt us and how bugged we are by them?

"COUNT OTHERS MORE SIGNIFICANT THAN YOURSELVES" - Philippians 2.3

If we keep score when they're wrong or hurting toward us does that mean we consider them more significant than us, or do we consider ourselves more significant?

"AS YOU WISH THAT OTHERS WOULD DO TO YOU, SO DO TO THEM" - Luke 6.31

Do we want them keeping score of how they think we've wronged them?

"WITH THE MEASURE YOU USE IT WILL BE MEASURED TO YOU" - Luke 7.2

Hmmm. Is that happening? Could we be bringing it on ourselves? Could they be behaving towards us because of our behavior towards them? Could they be keeping score of us using the measure we're using?

**"LET NO DEBT REMAIN OUTSTANDING, EXCEPT THE CONTINUING DEBT TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER"
- Romans 13.8**

Do we believe that? If so, we could start by finding some small thing where we've been loved by the person we're keeping score on. Then try to pay it back.

SUMMARY

KEEPING SCORE SEEMS HARMLESS. It's not.

KEEPING SCORE DISRUPTS FAMILY PEACE. It divides us, leads to bitterness and more score-keeping, and can result in a long term coldness in our relationships.

WE RARELY THINK OTHERS KEEP SCORE OF US. But they do.

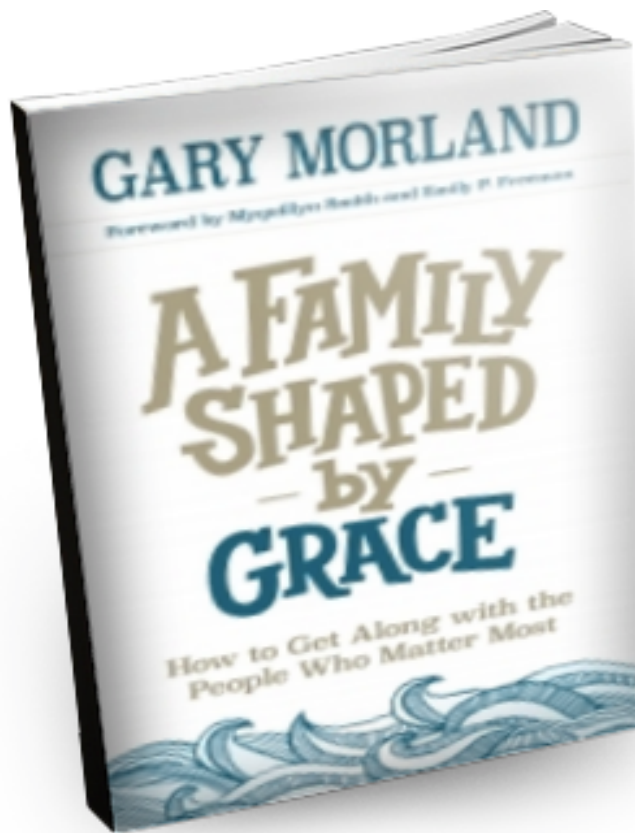
GRACE AND HEALING GROW when we focus on the other person's good points and honestly face our own faults.

NURTURING OUR OWN ATTITUDE OF HUMILITY BEFORE GOD develops a heart that's less and less interested in keeping score.

Any questions or thoughts? Email me at gary@garymorland.com. I promise I'll read it. Thanks!



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Keeping score is one of the "Everyday Tactics of Family Dis-Harmony." There are six other similar tactics you might want to avoid, and you could even exchange them for the "Timeless Tools of Family Peace."

"A FAMILY SHAPED BY GRACE: How to Get Along With the People Who Matter Most" will gently lead you in making that exchange. Available June, 2017.

Gary Morland is a husband and dad who was once dominated by addiction and family dysfunction but is now best friends with acceptance and grace. He'd love to help you and your family the way he was helped.

