

Love and Marriage

Lesson 7: Conflict

Questions & Objectives

- Understand why we fight and what causes quarrels.
- What is the goal for helping our spouse change? What should be at the heart of this and what methods can I use to best help?
- What are the two main types of conflict? How can each be best addressed?

Lesson

WATCH

[Nate Bargatze: We Got into a Fight Over Chocolate Milk](#)

(Credit: everythingnatebargatze)

Why We Fight

Conflict is sure to come in any relationship and in every marriage. Competing ideas and interests, come into contact and there's a natural conflict between them.

What causes us to quarrel and fight with each other?

James 4:1-3 provides several key points for us:

- Our _____ and desires;
- _____ and coveting things, but not asking God for them;
- Asking with _____ motives, out of selfishness and selfish ambition.

What common theme(s) run through these?

REFLECTION Is it possible some of our conflict is caused by prioritizing my own desires over my partner? Where and how can I change this?



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The Tough Biblical Pill

At a high-level, what's the solution to this?

_____ to Christ.

¹Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. ²And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

- Ephesians 5:1-2 (ESV)

What is one of the primary intra-marriage reasons why has God gifted you with a wonderful spouse, even if it seems they pick fights?

Men get married expecting the woman not to change, and she does;
Women get married expecting the man to change, and he doesn't.

Husbands

²⁵Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

- Ephesians 5:25-27 (ESV)

Key Points:

1. _____ are not Christ. Christ is Christ. We must admit to ourselves the possibility that we may be wrong at times.
2. Conformity is to _____, not to Husbands. There is a parallel relationship between Jesus and the church.



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Why did Jesus lay down His life for the church?

3. Husbands should be chief _____.

**WHEN WE LEAD AND, WHEN NECESSARY, CONFRONT OUR WIVES, ARE WE
SELF-EXALTING OR SELF-DENYING?**

Wives

²²Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.
²⁴Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

- Ephesians 5:22-24 (ESV)

Key Points

1. Submission is to Christ first, then your _____ .
 - a. Submission is not godly if it violates God's Word – but you must be honest about this.
2. Change is effected through _____.
 - a. This is more for spiritual needs: to conform to Christ.
3. _____ is counterproductive.
 - a. Be mindful of this. You speak about 3,000 words more each day than your man¹ – and if most of those are negative or received that way, it will produce the opposite effect of what's desired.

**BOTH SPOUSES SHOULD SEEK TO HELP THE OTHER CONFORM TO CHRIST THROUGH
SELF-SACRIFICIAL ACTION AND LOVE.**

REFLECTION In what tangible areas can I improve how I love and respect my spouse?



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The Danger is Tyranny

- Male tyranny:
- Female tyranny:

UNITY > COMPROMISE

How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!

- Psalm 133:1 (NIV)

WATCH

[James Sexton on the Problem of the Lemon](#)

(Credit: Dr. Daily)

Conflict

EVERY TIME YOU WIN AN ARGUMENT, YOU DEFEAT YOUR SPOUSE.

The goal isn't to win the argument, but to either clarify and come to unity, or to problem-solve together to find a mutually-acceptable solution.

WATCH

[Stop Winning Arguments – Do This Instead](#)

(Credit: Cup and Inspiration)

Perpetual

Ongoing issues not easily resolved, because in some manner they're core to a spouse's identity, personality, or dreams.

- The root of these is often a "_____"

The root of these arguments is often a "Big Issue"™ like trust, security, selfishness, etc.

This doesn't mean it's doomed! More than _____% of marital conflict – even among happily married couples – falls into this category.



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What's an example of a "perpetual" problem in my marriage that we've learned to address in a POSITIVE way?

What other issues might be perpetual issues? How can we work to address these?

It's important how the bid/request is communicated and received, but it's also important that each spouse are willing to make a _____ - _____ effort.

- _____ can be helpful here. A good-natured manner and approach better positions you to address and deal with issues more effectively.

Avoidance Exacerbates

Momentarily is fine; but don't avoid issues altogether.

1. You will not _____ in this area (as a couple or individuals).
2. Some couples will overlook _____. This defeats part of the purpose of your marriage and your role in it.
3. It can lead to emotional _____ .

Keys to Conflict Resolution

¹⁴Pursue peace with everyone, as well as holiness, without which no one will see the Lord. ¹⁵See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God, and that no root of bitterness springs up to cause trouble and defile many.

- Hebrews 12:14-15 (BSB)

1. Negative emotions are still _____.

Underneath the negative emotion, your spouse generally has something _____ to tell you.

"WHEN YOU'RE IN PAIN, THE WORLD STOPS AND I LISTEN."



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2. It's Not a _____ Game.

There are no winners and losers if you don't play the game. Remember: you don't want to defeat your spouse; you want to recruit them and partner with them.

3. _____ is crucial.

"It is virtually impossible for people to heed advice unless they believe the other person understands, respects, and accepts them for who they are. When people feel criticized, disliked, or unappreciated, they are unable to change. Instead, they feel under siege, and they dig in."

- John Gottman

THIS IS NOT TO EXCUSE SIN, BUT TO ENCOURAGE THAT ALL THINGS BE DONE IN LOVE!

4. Focus on _____ and _____ .

Find a way to view your partner's shortcomings as peculiar oddities or amusing parts of the whole package.

5. Forgive.

Forgiveness is critical not just in a marriage, but especially so for us as Christians.

"Love keeps no record of wrong"

- 1 Corinthians 13:5c (NIV)



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Wrap-Up

- We saw that many quarrels stem from our own self-interests; the goal is to conform more to Christ, who emptied Himself and sacrificed to restore our relationship.
- Husbands and wives, with different roles and approaches, are called to support each other in becoming more like Christ, through love and respect.
- Tyranny is possible for either spouse and should be avoided.
- Every marriage has Perpetual, long-term problems and Solvable problems. The key is to identify which it is and work together to address or solve it.

Follow-Through

Meditate

1 Corinthians 13

Consider

In what ways can I reduce my own defensiveness in order to hear the underlying requests and concerns from my spouse, though they may be wrapped in negative emotion?

Which of our problems are long-term (Perpetual), and which are Solvable? Which ones are most important for us to consider addressing first? How can we best address these?

Act

- Take 5-10 minutes each day this week to earnestly pray for your spouse, their struggles, their well-being, and their best.
- Continue to nurture fondness and admiration by finding something to compliment or praise your spouse about this week.
- Engage with "bids" from your spouse – even if they're disguised as criticism.

References

1. Women speak 3,000 more words daily than men during midlife, [Phys.org](https://phys.org/news/2025-02-women-words-daily-men-midlife.html): <https://phys.org/news/2025-02-women-words-daily-men-midlife.html>, 2025

