

FIRST COMES LOVE
Happily Incompatible
Hebrews 12:14-15

Billy Graham once answered a question about how he and his wife have stayed married for more than 60 years: "We learned to be HAPPILY INCOMPATIBLE!"

Marriage seems to have turned into a conditional setting that somehow is only worth staying in if it makes you COMFORTABLE and HAPPY. The truth is, that is actually possible . . . IF you are willing to be UNCOMFORTABLE and UNHAPPY until you BOTH discover new levels of the JOY that comes with MATURITY! Not many are willing. Divorce on the grounds of INCOMPATIBILITY happens every day in the U.S. But, like Billy and Ruth Graham, you can learn that it is even possible to be HAPPY and INCOMPATIBLE at the same time. You will have to be, because you are both so DIFFERENT, and because you have one GUARANTEE in marriage: **You WILL face CONFLICT.** Jesus said, "It is INEVITABLE that offenses will come. . ." [More on this verse later!] The surprising truth about conflict that we don't often realize is this: **Conflict is the greatest growth factor in all relationships! God's word teaches that PAIN is the SOIL for PROGRESS.** Personally, I resist this truth because I am a WIMP. On the other hand, it is a God-thing that pain does NOT have to be WASTED. This includes RELATIONAL PAIN. So, let me ask you a question:

What is the biggest area of conflict in your marriage right now?

*The answer cannot be: My Spouse!

*It also should NOT be just what you think your SPOUSE THINKS it is!

*You are also only allowed to pick ONE ISSUE. So, don't pull out a giant notepad!

[Compare your answers with your spouses answer AFTER THIS SERVICE!]

-What does it mean if your answer is different?

-What does it mean if your answer is the same?

-Is this a BIG PICTURE issue, or a small matter of frustration?

A HEALTHY marriage is the RESULT of TWO PEOPLE choosing to WISELY work through every difficulty TOGETHER by means of COMMUNICATION, COMPROMISE, and LOVING CARE. There are so many verses in scripture that address relational conflict, but one of my favorite passages about this topic is **Hebrews 12:14-15 NLT**

14 Work at living in peace with everyone, and work at living a holy life, for those who are not holy will not see the Lord. 15 Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many.

In these verses are several KEY TRUTHS that will help you properly approach the pain that will come from a lifetime of living together with another person.

Resolving conflict requires the HARD WORK of COMMUNICATION. [Vs. 14a]

Definition of Communication: The imparting or exchanging of information or news; a means of CONNECTION between people or places.

MY definition of HEALTHY communication: Healthy communication is the ability to mutually exchange ideas, desires, and needs without confusion, accusation, or angry argument.

Simon Peter tied the concept of pursuing peace to communication.

1 Peter 3:10-11 NKJV

10 For "He who would love life and see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit. 11 Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it.

***Learn to LISTEN . . . FIRST. James 1:19 NLT**

19 Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry.

-This is a SKILL you develop and a principle of HONOR

*Are you listening or developing YOUR next point/argument?

*Are you seeking to DICTATE, MANIPULATE, or COMMUNICATE?

***Learn to express yourself with SKILL and WISDOM! Proverbs 15:1-2 NLT**

1 A gentle answer deflects anger, but harsh words make tempers flare. 2 The tongue of the wise makes knowledge appealing, but the mouth of a fool belches out foolishness.

-Balance emotions using words with proper tone and body language.

[Communication is 7% words, 38% tone, and 55% facial expressions!]

-Reading between the lines?

-Say what you are seeing to your spouse!

-Be considerate (Refer back to HONOR)

*Mocking (**Is this a pattern?**) and Fighting is not healthy expression

***Develop RULES for handling disagreements:** (Refer first to HONOR!)

-Acknowledge differences in personality

--Timing: Time of Day; Emotional status; Physical status

-Let the ISSUE remain the issue (Don't make it worse by attacking)

[How horses fight wolves in a circle kicking outward Vs. Jackasses kicking inward]

-Remember: You fix PROBLEMS, not PEOPLE!

***Make TIME for healthy, deep conversation!**

-This must become a REGULAR event (Daily is best!)

-Get away from the KIDS (Our 4-wheeler dates!)

-Honor one another's TIME ZONES

-Eliminate DISTRACTIONS

*Television

*Cell phone (Texts, Facebook/Instagram, etc.)

Did you notice how often the exchange of WORDS had to be given boundaries to make communication a SAFE experience? **This is because words come from our HEARTS, and if our hearts are sick, then our words won't be safe!** This leads me to our next KEY TRUTH.

Resolving conflict requires the PURSUIT of PERSONAL HOLINESS. [Vs. 14b]

I only want to spend a short moment on this point, but don't confuse length of time with the importance of the truth. The pursuit of HOLINESS is the KEY to health in a relationship. If your heart is not HOLY, then it will not be HEALTHY; therefore your relationship will not be either healthy or holy. **There is a direct link between your pursuit of God and your pursuit of peace. The closer you get to God, the more you are able to SEE and REPENT of the SIN that is present in your life.** Therefore, the BEST thing that you can bring to your relationship with your wife is a vibrant relationship with God himself!

The QUESTION that I want to ask you in this point is this: Are you consistently looking for OFFENSES and WEAKNESSES within your OWN heart and life? **If you are then you will truly be willing and able to SEE and OWN your faults in any conflict that you are experience with your spouse.**

*Jesus said that it was inevitable that offenses would come, but WOE to the one through whom those offenses come!

-We often CREATE CONFLICT by a stubborn, inflexible attitude.

-We must learn to bring our attitudes BEFORE THE LORD in humble prayer.

*Seeing God refers to your capacity to acknowledge and be awed by God's matchless and perfect nature. **[This WILL affect you like Isaiah – Isaiah 6: Woe is me!]**

Resolving conflict requires keeping a LOOKOUT for BURIED BITTERNESS.

Too often, couples come together in marriage with NO CLUE that either of them might be carrying the seed of bitterness in their hearts from past pains. Sadly, some couples never realize that the CONFLICT in their marriage is actually ROOTED in an unresolved issue that was never truly dealt with in their lives. **[Couple that went through an awful divorce without the husband ever knowing of the wife's sexual abuse.]**

***You must BOTH be WATCHFUL for any ROOT of BITTERNESS that may be hiding in either of your hearts! "Look out for each other . . . Watch out!" (15)**

***If your relationship is SPIRALING out of control, seek God's help in identifying any buried PAST pain that is blossoming into bitterness.**

-This kind of bitterness turns simple communication into conflict:

*Arguing over nothing (TV shows, restaurants, etc.)

*Constant feelings of insecurity come out as ANGER and RAGE.

-Some ONE has to step ABOVE EMOTIONS and move in LOVE toward the OTHER.

*"Look out for one another." This is a sacrificial act of love. Take the hurt!

*Commit to FINDING this root together NO MATTER WHAT!

***Next, you must STAY COMMITTED to RESOLVING ALL DISAGREEMENTS with honor and gentleness.**

-Learn HOW to express/identify offenses and hurts.

***"This is what you did, and this is how it affected me."**

*This method is NOT ACCUSATIVE, nor is it an ATTACK. It is straight truth!

-EVERY argument and disagreement MUST be brought to an honorable and loving CONCLUSION.

-If only ONE of you feels that an issue is resolved, it is NOT resolved! Got it?

*Seek HELP if you cannot come to a resolve alone together.

*Resolve is COMPLETE when you are able to apply the ultimate salve:

***The KEY to RECEIVING the GRACE of God is that of FORGIVENESS!**

-This is NOT DENIAL or DISMISSING an offense as unimportant!

-In a BEST-CASE SCENARIO this is an "eyes-wide-open" CHOICE to forgive once the offense has been brought into the open, owned, and then RELEASED to God!

*Confession and forgiveness CLEAN the PLATE of your relationship.

-The best way to "fall short" of GRACE is to PRESUME upon forgiveness without BROKENNESS or CONFESSION.

*This mocks holiness and it dishonors the one that has been sinned against.

***The bitterness that comes from unresolved conflict NEVER stays hidden; it buries itself and it GROWS. "... Springing up, and corrupting MANY."**

-Bitterness never stays simply in your own heart. It SPREADS! "Poisonous"

-You must BOTH be on your guard against this in your relationship.

HOMEWORK:

So, what is the biggest area of conflict in your relationship right now?

*Each of you must WRITE DOWN what YOU think is the biggest conflict.

*Compare your answers with one another this afternoon.

-Are your answers DIFFERENT or the SAME?

*Determine HOW you can begin working on this conflict in a NEW MANNER!

Have all couples STAND and then PRAY for them.

Let's pray.