

Resolving Conflict in Our Marriage

Stumbling blocks or Stepping stones?

Ontario couples' seminar #5

I. Conflicts arise in marriages because:

- 1) Natural cause – Amos 3:3 – A marriage is made of 2 unique and very different individuals. Men and women process differently, view life differently. Misunderstandings (missing each other) can easily happen when we fail to realize this. Besides this, we are proud and selfish by nature, which produces strife.
- 2) Supernatural cause – Jn.10:10 – Satan tries to destroy marriages because marriage is a picture of Christ and the Church. Also, broken marriages produce broken children which he can more easily bring into bondage.

II. Options in dealing with conflict in our marriage:

- 1) Pretend it is not there. (Not a good idea)
- 2) (If it is a small issue) Choose to overlook it with love. Eph.4:2 “forbearing”
- 3) (If it is large enough that it continues making conflict between you) Talk it out in love and find a solution. Eph.4:3
- 4) (If it continues to grow worse after repeated attempts to talk it out) Find a godly pastor or counsellor who can help you. Pro.11:14

III. Basic steps to help you and your spouse resolve conflicts in your marriage. Do not argue in public or before your children. Wash your dirty laundry in private! Remember, your goal is not to win the argument, but rather to understand each other better!

- 1) **Pray together** and ask God to help you resolve your conflict. Matt.18:19

- 2) Rehearse the situation (**communicate about our problem**) Eph.4:15

Do not accuse. Phrase your discussion so that you are not attacking each other. Example: Rather than saying, “You said...”, why not say it this way, “What I heard you say was.... Is that what you meant?”

Always speak the truth with kindness and love. Ask questions; Many of our problems come because we assume that we know why our spouse said or did something.

Keep your emotions LOW! This means you must keep the volume and pitch of your voice low! Pro.15:1 - Ask God to help you. Things get bad fast when we are guided by our emotions rather than by truth and love. A rash statement during the heat of emotions can destroy years of trust. Beware superlatives (always, never) in your speech; they are usually false, and stir up anger. Give the other person time to speak; do not cut them off. If emotions begin to rise, assure the other person of your love and commitment, and take time to cool down before resuming the conversation.

Make sure you are understanding each other! Communication is so vital. It is good in a sensitive conversation to do play-back. "OK, what I am hearing you say is _____. Is that what you mean to communicate?"

3) Face the facts and break your heart over your own faults/failures (**repent**).

Jam.4:8-9 - Be honest about your own faults. Do not excuse them by comparing with your spouse's faults. II Cor.10:12. Ask God to show you your own heart. See root causes, and beg God to help you dig out the roots. If you do not remove the roots, the tree will continue to yield bad fruit. Lk.3:9

4) Verbally (**confess**) your needs/faults/failures Jam.5:16 - Open your mouth and confess to your spouse what you have just agreed with God. Be thorough and confess both the fruit and the roots that produced the bad fruit.

6) Ask forgiveness & forgive (**restore**) Eph.4:32 - After you have confessed your faults and their roots, say something like, "Dear, I am sorry that I have hurt you and not been a good husband/wife to you. Will you please forgive me? Then the offended spouse should verbally forgive them. Do not remind your spouse of his/her fault/failure during future conflicts. Matt.18:21,35

7) **Pray together** in turn for each other. I Pet.3:7 - Thank God for your spouse. Ask God to bless him/her. Ask God to help you both to deny self and love each other so you will be a good picture of Jesus and His Church.

IV. Some further thoughts:

A. Humility is an important key. Pro.13:10. Maybe you are not the major one at fault, but be willing to make the first move. Frequent, honest, humble apology (by both spouses) is the lubricating oil for every good marriage. These words should not be foreign to your tongue, "I am sorry. I should not have done/said that. Can you please forgive me?"

B. Divorce is NEVER an option! There is only one boat in this ocean. You must work out your differences and stay together and work together. However huge your relationship difficulties may seem, God's grace is sufficient to transform you both and make you best friends! Adulterers have NO place in God's Kingdom. I Cor. 6:9-10. Divorce is NEVER an option!

C. Some things you should NEVER say are:

I could leave you and find another spouse.

I would not care if you leave me.

Why can't you be like so-and-so?

D. Finally, thank and praise God for your spouse in your personal prayers and when praying together. This is a spiritual investment that yields love!

Questions:

1. Honestly answer these questions:
 - a) How are we as a couple doing in resolving our conflicts?
 - b) Are we growing closer together in heart and mind, or farther apart?"
2. What are the core character qualities/attitudes that make conflict resolution possible and lasting? What are the character qualities that make conflict resolution difficult and short-lived?