

“Choosing Constructive Conflict!”

*It costs something to have meaningful communication. But it is definitely worth the price! The price must be paid -- in time given, a little less sleep at night, a willingness to discuss the priorities of life, and a willingness to be **vulnerable**. And a determination to solve the problems and issues that life bring.*

We may experience the following:

1. A tension-filled topic in the first year of marriage.
2. A hasty effort to bury it for fear of creating problems,
3. but we know something is wrong for the conflict continues because we know we have not solved things.
4. Silence in the marriage may denote fear, a lack of caring what the other partner thinks, or an unwillingness to pay the price of deep sharing.

Some Principles To Follow In Constructive Conflict

A. Keep Cool

1. The Bible says that *“a quick tempered person acts foolishly.”* (Prov. 14:17) *“and a hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but the slow to anger pacifies contention.”* (Prov. 15:18)
(At this point you may want to download, or study the chapter on anger found in the study... “Emotional Problems in Life and Home” found at our web site.)
2. Some things will help you to stay cool... like:
 - a. Practice thinking before speaking,
 - b. handling conflicts lovingly, without anger,
 - c. ponder and pray over your answer, (Prov. 15:18)
 - d. back away before having a quarrel. (Prov. 17:14)
 - e. Restraint your comments, (Prov. 10:19)
 - f. leave the subject, pray much, and then come back to solve the issue.

B. Make understanding your aim:

1. Your aim ought to be *not to win*, for there is no such thing as *“one who wins.”*
2. Your aim should not be to vent your anger or feelings to the other person. (Prov. 18:2)
3. We must listen with the heart (Prov. 18:13).
A conflict cannot be entered into with idea of someone winning, there is no winning or losing in a constructive conflict, lest both lose.

C. Keep short accounts: (Eph. 4:26-27)

The deadline to solve problems in a marriage is prior to bedtime. We may not be always able to do this, but this should be our aim.

D. Act wisely, not foolishly: (Prov. 29:9,11; 3:3-5; 25:28)

Be kind, truthful, and trusting that God will lead you.

2. Do not be wise in your own eyes. (This is maybe the most difficult part, for in our pride we have determined that we are right, and this too often becomes a normal, consistent response.)
 3. Ask God to make you a wise person, remember that a wise person accepts correction. (Prov. 9:8)
 4. Be aware of the tone of your voice. Lowering it rather than raising it by remembering that *“a soft answer turns away wrath.”* (Prov. 15:1)
-

The Scene of Life May Include All the Following:

Too busy: We may even effectively block the effort by our spouse to solve a problem by stating -- we are too busy.

Changing the subject: Our spouse endeavors again to bring up the problem that needs solving, but the other person effectively changes the subject in order to bypass the issue.

Defensiveness: Now the problem may be brought up again, but a strong defensive statement is made to put the other person in his or her place. . . so the subject again is set aside.

Super guilt: Here the spouse grows silent, depressed, and admits or feels total failure. The mate reassures them that they should not feel guilty, so again the real problem is ignored. As the guilt becomes the new issue. The person feeling guilt cannot seek a solution to his inner need or the problem at hand that fostered this.

Peace at any price: This tactic used by many is to simply say...*“Well, just do whatever you want, I don’t care what you do... you’ll do whatever you want anyway, so why should I care.”* Communication is crushed, the real issue is not addressed, the original need or problem is not solved.

Some “Nevers” Which We Must Choose:

A. Never use sarcasm in conversing with one another.

1. The dictionary defines **sarcasm** as, *“A sharp and often satirical or ironic utterance designed to cut or give pain.”* *“bitter, caustic language that hurts deeply.”*
2. The Greek word means *“to tear flesh, bit the lips in rage, to sneer.”*
3. Some families fall into a trap of such talk, using sarcasm in joking or kidding.

B. Never criticize or correct one another in public.

Do we make our mate seem small in the eyes of other people (Phil. 2:1-4; Rom. 12:10)

Do we belittle, correct, or interrupt the story they are telling?

E. Never drop a delayed “time bomb.”

1. Tell the truth, don't imply something then later change it at an inopportune time.
 2. Be honest, don't later criticize what you once said was fine. . . be truthful in the first place. (Eph. 4:15; 25; 4:32; Col. 3:8-9)
-

Some Biblical Directives For Confronting Conflict

(Study these together, work together to resolve problems, work at practicing these truths.)

1. Prov. 3:5-6 *Trust the Lord for the outcome.*
2. Prov. 15:1 *Don't verbally attack your spouse.*
3. Prov. 16:32 *Keep your emotions under control.*
4. Prov. 17:9 *Don't bring up the past offense, stick with the present issue at hand.*
5. Prov. 19:11 *Don't accuse or blame.*
6. Eccl. 7:8,9 *Listen patiently to everything your spouse has to say.*
7. Rom. 12:16 *Keep a humble, learner's spirit.*
8. Rom. 2:17 *Don't retaliate.*
9. Eph. 4:25 *Be truthful, don't exaggerate.*
10. Eph. 4:29 *Think of your spouse's needs when you reply.*

God Has Given Us His Word (II Tim. 3:15-17) . . . for

1. **Doctrine** -- so that we might know the great truths revealed in His Word.
2. **Reproof** -- so that we might hear God's rebukes and reprimands concerning our sins and manner of life.
3. **Correction** -- so that we might change and rectify our behavior when He has reproved us.
4. **Instruction in righteousness** -- so that we might live the kind of life that pleases him in all of our relationships in the home.