

Merge Premarital Class

Watermark Community Church | Merge

Resource List & Statement of Faith	3
Session One	7
<i>A Biblical View of Marriage</i>	
Session Two	25
<i>Communication & Conflict</i>	
Session Three	35
<i>Biblical Roles in Marriage</i>	
Session Four	45
<i>Strengthening Your Relationship</i>	
Session Five	55
<i>Finances</i>	
Session Six	73
<i>Expectations & Family/In-Laws</i>	
Session Seven	99
<i>Sexual Intimacy</i>	
Session Eight	111
<i>Understanding Your Spouse</i>	
Answer Key	116
Class Evaluation	119

Session Two

Communication and Conflict

Common Communication & Conflict Resolution Mistakes

1. **Mistake #1** — Believe the goal of communication is to make sure you are _____.

Proverbs 18:2 *A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion.*

The goal is _____.

2. **Mistake #2** — Not understanding the impact of your _____ and _____.

Proverbs 18:21 *Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who will love it will eat its fruits.*

_____ you say and _____ you say it, matters.

3. **Mistake #3** — Don't recognize any of your _____ communication patterns.

W_____ — unwillingness to stay in important conversations

Exit Strategy:

E_____ — negative responses to another that create a snowball effect that leads to increased hostility and negativity

Exit Strategy:

N_____ — believes the motive of the other person to be more negative than is really the case

Exit Strategy:

I_____ — subtle indirect putdowns of the thoughts, feelings or character of another

Exit Strategy:

4. **Mistake #4** — Assume you are _____ because you don't fight.

Romans 12:18 *If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.*

Conflict is an _____.

5. **Mistake #5** — Assume conflict ends when you say, _____.

Colossians 3:12-13 *Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.*

Ask for _____

Forgiveness is _____ and _____.

6. **Mistake #6** — Blame your _____ as the main reason you fight.

James 4:1 – 2 *What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel...*

The reason we fight is because we are _____.

7. Mistake #7— Avoid _____ when conflicting.

Proverbs 18:13 *If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame.*

Active Listening

- A. Rules for the *speaker*
 - i. Speak only for yourself. Don't mind-read.
 - ii. Speak in short phrases.
 - iii. Stop often and let the listener paraphrase.
- B. Rules for the *listener*
 - i. Paraphrase what you hear.
 - ii. Don't refute.
 - iii. Focus on what the speaker is saying.
- C. Rules for *both*
 - i. The speaker has the floor.
 - ii. Speaker keeps the floor while the listener paraphrases.
 - iii. Share the floor.

8. Mistake #8— Don't ever take a _____.

Ephesians 4:26 *Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger.*

Try not to have conversations when you are:

H _____

A _____

L _____

T _____

Some rules for time out:

- A. Honor the request.
- B. Seek God during the time out.
- C. The one who calls the time out proposes the time to start discussing again.

9. Mistake #9— Forget that _____ and _____ matter.

Colossians 4:6 *Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.*

_____ someone the truth is never optional – _____ and _____ are always optional.

10. Mistake #10— Never ask others to _____.

Matthew 18:15-17 *"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector."*

If _____, bring others in.

Session Two

Homework

Assignments:

1. Turn to the evaluation page at the end of your workbook and rate Session Two.
2. Answer the following questions on your own, then discuss your answers with your significant other.
 - a. Which of the negative communication patterns do you and your significant other most identify with? (W.E.N.I. *Withdrawal, Escalation, Negative Interpretation, Invalidation*). Pay attention in the weeks ahead to see if you practice these negative patterns on a consistent basis.
 - b. What are some specific strategies you can put into practice to guard against the four negative communication patterns?
 - c. What are three subjects, topics, circumstances or settings that usually lead to “fighting” or hard feelings? (i.e. in-laws, finances, schedules)
3. Memorize:

Proverbs 18:2 *A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion.*

4. Continue to practice the Speaker/Listener technique.

5. How do you view conflict? As something to avoid at all costs or as an opportunity to glorify God and build your relationship? Why?

6. How did your family of origin resolve conflict? What would you like to bring into your marriage from your family (with regard to communication and conflict)? What would you like to avoid bringing into your marriage?

7. Read through Watermark's Conflict Field Guide (pages 31 - 34) and discuss with your significant other.

8. Optional: This week, watch Ted Lowe's talk on tone. Ted is from an organization called MarriedPeople and spoke at Watermark's marriage conference, UNCOMMON, in February 2013. Listen to "What's Your Tone When Things Are Going Wrong?" on www.watermarkradio.com and check out the notes listed with the audio. Talk with your significant other about the way your tone impacts your everyday.

9. This week, the male should plan a special date night. Plan something that will surprise her and encourage her – make sure it is something that she would like to do on a date night. Try to think outside of the box of just dinner and a movie. Enjoy a date night and keep conversation fun and free from conflict!

CONFLICT

OUR CONSTANT OPPORTUNITY

FIELD GUIDE

Watermark Community Church is committed to resolving conflict in a way that glorifies the Lord, edifies the body of Christ, and reflects the principles laid out in Scripture. Since all relationships – including those among believers – will be faced with disagreements at different times, all Watermark Members, as followers of Christ, commit to the following biblical principles as a guide for resolving these issues. We trust that the following information will serve as a continual resource for you as you strive to serve others, grow personally and glorify the Lord in the context of conflict.

Scriptures to read and remember when considering how you are going to handle conflict:
Prov. 6:16-19, Prov. 17:14, Prov. 20:3, Matt. 5:23-24, 1 Peter 5:5-7, Eph. 4:1-3, Prov. 18:19.

WATERMARK'S COMMITMENT TO BIBLICAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION:

As people reconciled to God by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we believe we are called to respond to conflict in a way that is remarkably different from the way the world deals with conflict. We also believe conflict provides opportunities to glorify God, serve other people, and grow to be like Christ. Therefore, in response to God's love and in reliance on His grace, we commit ourselves to respond to conflict according to the following principles:

GLORIFY GOD – Instead of focusing on our own desires or dwelling on what others may do, we will seek to please and honor God – by depending on His wisdom, power and love; by faithfully obeying His commands; and by seeking to maintain a loving, merciful and forgiving attitude.

GET THE LOG OUT OF YOUR OWN EYE –

Instead of attacking others or dwelling on their wrongs, we will take responsibility for our own contribution to conflicts – confessing our sins, asking God to help us change any attitudes and habits that lead to conflict and seeking to repair any harm we have caused.

GO AND SHOW YOUR BROTHER HIS FAULT –

Instead of pretending that conflict doesn't exist or talking about others behind their backs, we will choose to overlook minor offenses, or we will talk directly and graciously with those whose offenses seem too serious to overlook. When a conflict with another Christian cannot be resolved in private, we will ask others in the body of Christ to help us settle the matter in a biblical manner.

GO AND BE RECONCILED – Instead of accepting premature compromise or allowing relationships to wither, we will actively pursue genuine peace and reconciliation – forgiving others as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us, and seeking just and mutually beneficial solutions to our differences.

By God's grace, we will apply these principles as a matter of stewardship, realizing that conflict is an opportunity, not an accident. We will remember that success, in God's eyes, is not a matter of specific results but of faithful, dependent obedience. And we will pray that our service as peacemakers brings praise to our Lord and leads others to know His infinite love.

*These principles are so simple that they can be used to resolve the most basic conflicts of daily life. But they are so powerful that they have been used to mediate and arbitrate bitter divorce and child custody actions, embezzlement situations, church divisions, multi-million dollar business disputes, malpractice lawsuits and terrible sexual abuse cases. These principles are briefly discussed below. For a more detailed explanation, please see **The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict**, by Ken Sande (Baker Books, 2nd ed. 1997).*

"We must picture Hell as a state where everyone is perpetually concerned about his own dignity and advancement, where everyone has a grievance, and where everyone lives the deadly serious passions of envy, self-importance and resentment." - C. S. Lewis

2 BEGINNING THE JOURNEY: HITTING THE TRAIL TO LOVE YOUR FRIEND

GO AND SHOW YOUR BROTHER HIS FAULT

Don't Sweat the Small Stuff

OVERLOOK MINOR OFFENSES

Another key principle of peacemaking involves an effort to help others understand how they have contributed to a conflict. Before you rush off to confront someone, however, remember that it is appropriate to overlook minor offenses (Prov. 19:11). As a general rule, an offense should be overlooked if you can answer "no" to all of the following questions:

- Is the offense seriously dishonoring God?
- Has it permanently damaged a relationship?
- Is it seriously hurting other people?
- Is it seriously hurting the offender himself?

Don't Spread the Big Stuff

TALK IN PRIVATE

If you answer "yes" to any of these questions, an offense is too serious to overlook, in which case God commands you to go and talk with the offender privately and lovingly about the situation (see Matt. 18:15). As you do so, remember to:

- Pray for humility and wisdom (1 Peter 5:5).
- Plan your words carefully—think of how you would want to be confronted (Prov. 15:1-2; 16:23).
- Anticipate likely reactions and plan appropriate responses—rehearsals can be very helpful (Prov. 20:18).
- Choose the right time and place—talk in person whenever possible (Prov. 16:21; 27:12).
- Assume the best about the other person until you have facts to prove otherwise (Prov. 18:17).
- Listen carefully (Prov. 18:13).
- Speak only to build others up (Eph. 4:29).
- Ask for feedback from the other person (Prov. 18:2).
- Trust God (Psalm 37:3).

Don't Stop if You've Been Stuffed

TAKE OTHERS ALONG (MATT. 18:17)

If an initial confrontation does not resolve a conflict, do not give up. Review what was said and done, and look for ways to approach the other person more effectively. Then try again with even stronger prayer support.

If you have done all you can to share your concern and the matter is still unchanged in that it is "too serious to overlook," you should ask one or two other people to meet with you and the person you have approached to help you resolve your differences (Matt. 18:16-20).

DON'T STOP IF IT GETS STICKY

As unfortunate as it is, there are times when the only solution left is to expand the circle of accountability and wisdom to include an even wider community within the body of Christ. It is imperative that the process is not stopped short of any Scriptural admonition to diligently preserve the unity that the Lords intends. Where conflict persists, it is the job of the wider community of faith to speak boldly into the matter and where necessary separate itself from hard hearts that refuse to deal with matters "too serious to overlook," (Matt 18:17a; 1 Cor. 5:1-2) even when that includes necessary separation until such a time as when the sin issues creating the conflict are acknowledged and dealt with.

GO AND BE RECONCILED

One of the unique features of biblical peacemaking is the pursuit of genuine forgiveness and reconciliation. Even though followers of Christ have experienced the greatest forgiveness in the world, we often fail to show that forgiveness to others. To cover up our disobedience we often use the shallow statement, "I forgive her — I just don't want to have anything to do with her again." Just think, however, how you would feel if God said to you, "I forgive you; I just don't want to have anything to do with you again?"

Praise God that He never says this! Instead, He forgives you totally and opens the way for genuine reconciliation. He calls you to forgive others in exactly the same way: "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Col. 3:12-14; see also 1 Cor. 13:5; Ps. 103:12; Isa. 43:25). One way to imitate God's forgiveness is to purpose to live with these actions and attitudes when you forgive someone:

- I will not dwell on this incident.
- I will not revisit this incident or use it against you.
- I will not talk to others about this incident.
- I will not allow this incident to stand between us or hinder our personal relationship.

Remember that forgiveness is a spiritual process that you cannot fully accomplish on your own. Therefore, as you seek to forgive others, continually ask God for grace to enable you to imitate His wonderful forgiveness toward you.

NEGOTIATE IN A BIBLICAL MANNER

Even when you manage to resolve personal offenses through confession and forgiveness, you may still need to deal with substantive issues, which may involve money, property, or the exercise of certain rights. These issues should not be swept under the carpet or automatically passed to a higher authority. Instead, they should be negotiated in a biblically faithful manner.

As a general rule, you should try to negotiate substantive issues in a cooperative manner rather than a competitive manner. In other words, instead of aggressively pursuing your own interests and letting others look out for themselves, you should deliberately look for solutions that are beneficial to everyone involved.

As the Apostle Paul put it, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Phil. 2:3-4; see Matt. 22:39; 1 Cor. 13:5; Matt. 7:12).

A biblical approach to negotiation may be summarized in five basic steps, which we refer to as the **PAUSE** principle:

- **P**repare (pray, get the facts, seek godly counsel, develop options)
- **A**ffirm relationships (show genuine concern and respect for others)
- **U**nderstand interests (identify others' concerns, desires, needs, limitations, or fears)
- **S**earch for creative solutions (prayerful brainstorming)
- **E**valuate options objectively and reasonably (evaluate, don't argue)

If you have never used this approach to negotiation before, it will take time and practice (and sometimes advice from others) to become proficient at it. But it is well worth the effort, because learning the PAUSE principle will help you not only resolve your present dispute but also negotiate more effectively in all areas of your life.

3

ENDURING DIFFICULTIES ON THE JOURNEY: WHAT TO DO WHEN THE TRAIL GETS ROUGH

BE PREPARED FOR UNREASONABLE PEOPLE

Whenever you are responding to conflict, you need to realize that other people may harden their hearts and refuse to be reconciled to you. There are two ways you can prepare for this possibility.

First, remember that God does not measure success in terms of results but in terms of faithful obedience. He knows that you cannot force other people to act in a certain way. Therefore He will not hold you responsible for their actions or for the ultimate outcome of a conflict.

All God expects of you is to obey His revealed will as faithfully as possible (see Rom. 12:18). If you do that, no matter how the conflict turns out, you can walk away with a clear conscience before God, knowing that His appraisal is, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Second, resolve that you will not give up on finding a biblical solution. If a dispute is not easily resolved, you may be tempted to say, "Well, I tried all the biblical principles I know, and they just didn't work. It looks like I'll have to handle this another way"—meaning, the world's way.

A follower of Christ should never close the Bible. When you try to resolve a conflict but do not see the results you desire, you should seek God even more earnestly through prayer, the study of His Word and the counsel of His church. As you do so, it is essential to keep your focus on Christ and all that He has already done for you (Col. 3:1-4). It is also helpful to follow five principles for overcoming evil, which are described in Romans 12:14-21:

- Control your tongue ("Bless those who curse you." See also Eph. 4:29).
- Seek godly advisors (identify with others, and do not become isolated).
- Keep doing what is right (1 Pet. 2:12, 15; 3:15b-16).
- Recognize your limits (instead of retaliating, stay within proper biblical channels).
- Use the ultimate weapon: deliberate, focused love (John 3:16; Luke 6:27-31).

At the very least, these steps will protect you from being consumed by the acid of your own bitterness and resentment if others continue to oppose you. And in some cases, God may eventually use such actions to bring another person to repentance (1 Sam. 24:1-22).

Even if other people persist in doing wrong, you can continue to trust that God is in control and will deal with them in His time (see Psalms 10 and 37). This kind of patience in the face of suffering is commended by God (1 Pet. 2:19) and ultimately results in our good and His glory.

GET HELP FROM ABOVE

None of us can make complete and lasting peace with others in our own strength. We must have help from God. But before we can receive that help, we need to be at peace with God Himself.

Peace with God doesn't come automatically, because all of us have sinned and alienated ourselves from Him (Isa. 59:1-2). Instead of living the perfect lives needed to enjoy fellowship with Him, each of us has a record stained with sin (Matt. 5:48; Rom. 3:23). As a result, we deserve to be eternally separated from God (Rom. 6:23a). That's the bad news.

The good news is that "God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Believing in Jesus means more than being baptized, going to church, or trying to be a good person. None of these activities can erase the sins you have already committed and will continue to commit throughout your life. Believing in Jesus means, first of all, admitting that you are a sinner and acknowledging that there is no way you can earn God's approval by your own works (Rom. 3:20; Eph. 2:8-9).

Second, it means believing that Jesus paid the full penalty for your sins when He died on the cross (Isa. 53:1-12; 1 Peter 2:24-25). In other words, believing in Jesus means trusting that He exchanged records with you at Calvary—that is, He took your sinful record on Himself and paid for it in full, giving you His perfect record.

When you believe in Jesus and receive His perfect record of righteousness, you can really have true peace with God. As you receive this peace, God will give you an increasing ability to make peace with others by following the peacemaking principles He gives us in Scripture, many of which are described above (Phil. 4:7; Matt. 5:9).

If you have never confessed your sin to God and believed in Jesus Christ as your Savior, Lord, and King, you can do so right now by sincerely praying this prayer:

*Lord Jesus,
I know that I am a sinner, and I realize that my good deeds could never make up for my wrongs. I need your forgiveness. I believe that you died for my sins, and I want to turn away from them. I trust you now to be my Savior, and I will follow you as my Lord and King, in the fellowship of your church.*

If you have prayed this prayer, it is essential that you find fellowship with other Christians in a church where the Bible is faithfully taught and applied. This fellowship will help you to learn more about God, grow in your faith, and obey what He commands, even when you are involved in a difficult conflict. Let us know how Watermark might be able to serve you as your place of fellowship.

GET HELP FROM THE CHURCH

As God helps you to practice His peacemaking principles, you will be able to resolve most of the normal conflicts of daily life on your own. Sometimes, however, you will encounter situations that you do not know how to handle. In such situations, it is wise and appropriate to turn to others in your community or to spiritually mature persons around you who can give you advice on how you might be able to apply these principles more effectively.

When individual advice does not enable you to resolve a dispute, you should ask one or two mutually respected friends to meet with you and your opponent to help you settle your difference through mediation or arbitration (Matt. 18:16-17; 1 Cor. 6:1-8).

If there is any way that we can serve you or help you apply these principles to your relationships, please let us know. To order the messages that accompany these notes, please click on the media tab at www.watermark.org.



Watermark Community Church
7540 LBJ Freeway
Dallas, Texas 75251
214.361.2275 • fax: 214.361.6519
www.watermark.org

This handout is a supplement to *Conflict: A Constant Opportunity*, a message series by Todd Wagner, Pastor of Watermark Community Church (Go to www.watermarkradio.com to watch or listen to series). Material adapted or borrowed from Ken Sande whose generosity in sharing his excellent work on conflict in *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*. Copyright © 1997 made this material possible.