

Marital Conflict

- I. Marital conflict is normal. **1CO 7:28.**
 - A. Sometimes it stems from sin, other times from insecurities, misunderstandings, differing visions/goals, etc.
 - B. Personality plays a role and personality issues can be innate and/or formed. Either way, personality is governable. Beware of, “I just can’t help myself...”
 - 1. We are prone to shaping our present by reactions to our past: errors in one’s own upbringing, sin issues which have been repented of but still plague the heart, etc.
 - 2. Beware of superimposing presuppositions formed by such things upon your marriage.
 - C. Somewhere, pride is likely in play. **PRO 13:10.**
 - D. If you are expecting a conflict-free relationship, you are expecting too much.
- II. Marital conflict can be a useful tool in maintaining mutual respect and enforcing mutual accountability. **PRO 27:17.**
 - A. Human nature is such that most people do not respect a pushover.
 - B. Conflict lets each partner know when his/her behavior is selfish and disrespectful towards the other.
 - C. Without such conflict, one's selfish behavior can go unchecked, breeding resentment in the other that can result in an explosion of the relationship.
- III. If both want to please the Lord, they will realize that separation is a difficult option in dealing with marital conflict (**1CO 7:10-11**) but sometimes it is the only option left.
- IV. If help is needed in resolving marital conflict, do not wait until the situation is so bad that it is either almost or altogether beyond repair.
 - A. Marriages take time to build and rebuild. Do not expect hasty solutions.
 - B. As in the building enterprise of Nehemiah's day, you need the Lord AND “...a mind to work” (**NEH 2:20; 4:6**).
- V. Wives should acknowledge that they do have a problem submitting to their husband's authority. **EPH 5:22-24.**
 - A. God commands women to be subject to their husbands “...in every thing” (**EPH 5:24**).
 - B. “Sin is the transgression of the law” (**1JO 3:4**), and law is *a rule of conduct imposed by authority*.
 - C. Since all are sinners, all have a problem submitting to authority. **1JO 1:8.**
 - D. When conflict arises, a woman needs to honestly examine herself to see if rebellion against authority is not a key factor.
 - E. Beware of the tendency to blame the person in authority when things go wrong regardless of the cause.
 - F. Do not equate imperfect authority with tyranny and use that as a pretext for rebellion.
- VI. Husbands need to remember to undergird their authority with consideration and tenderness. A man of steel must also be a man of velvet. **EPH 5:25-31.**
 - A. Authority does not mean the simple right to always have your own way.
 - 1. Pastors, men of authority, are not to be *self-willed*. **TIT 1:7.**
 - 2. Authority is for the edification, not the destruction of those under it. **2CO 10:8.**
 - B. A wife needs to know that a husband's authority is being wielded for the good of herself

and the children, not simply for his ego.

- C. A man must give his wife the consideration that he would give his own body.
- D. A man is to *cherish* his wife, which means to *hold her dear; to treat her with tenderness and affection, to make much of her.*
- E. An appeal to the wife born of love may be a better approach than dictating orders.
PHM 1:8-9.
- F. Men need to realize that a woman's defensiveness may stem from the fact that she knows that she is the weaker vessel (**1PE 3:7**). As such, she is to be honoured, not trampled upon.
- G. A wise leader considers the thoughts of those under him. He knows that there is a time to give in. **1CH 13:1-4 ct/w 1KI 12:1-20.**
- H. A wise leader will avoid impractical or unnecessary extremes in setting standards.
PHIL 4:5; MAT 11:30; GEN 33:13.
- I. A wise leader/husband will consult with his wife on family decisions. Her perspective is valuable and her suggestions are to be considered. **1PE 3:6; GEN 21:9-12.**

VII. Couples must learn to practice **1PE 3:8-11** IN marriage.

- A. Be pitiful and courteous to your spouse.
 - 1. Try to understand his/her problems and feelings.
 - 2. Seek to understand rather than pressing to be understood.
- B. Because you may feel you were mistreated does not justify treating your spouse the same way. Where will this ever end? Render blessing for cursing!
- C. "A soft answer turneth away wrath..." (**PRO 15:1**).

VIII. Forgive, forgive, forgive. **EPH 4:31-32.**

- A. Forgiveness is contrasted with wrath and bitterness which only promote conflict.
PRO 15:18; HEB 12:15.
- B. It is good to overlook one another's faults. Any relationship needs a lot of forbearance to survive. **PRO 19:11; COL 3:13.**
- C. However, when faults cannot be passed over they must be dealt with lest grudging set in.
LEV 19:17-18.
- D. Anger should be dealt with on a daily basis rather than being allowed to seethe.
EPH 4:26.
- E. When you forgive, TRULY forgive from the heart and do not keep reviving the issue.
MAT 18:35.
 - 1. God forgives and forgets. **HEB 10:17.**
 - 2. We are to forgive AS God forgives. **EPH 4:32.**
- F. Don't let pride stop you from admitting error. Love means always being prepared to say you're sorry.
- G. "Marriage is a contest to out-give and out-forgive your spouse." (Dave Ashworth)

IX. Here are some pointers for dealing with marital conflict.

- A. Discussion of disagreements and faults should be constructive. **EPH 4:29.**
- B. Disagreements and faults must be dealt with in an atmosphere of respect.
 - 1. A good marriage will contain mutual respect that will be expressed.
1PE 3:7; EPH 5:33.
 - a. honour: High RESPECT, esteem, or reverence, accorded to exalted worth or rank; deferential admiration or approbation.
 - b. reverence: (v.) To salute with deep RESPECT; to treat with RESPECT or deference.

2. People accept criticism better from those whom they know respect them and have their best interests at heart.
- C. A *haughty* (High in one's own estimation; lofty and disdainful in feeling or demeanour; proud, arrogant, supercilious) attitude must be avoided. **PRO 16:18.**
- D. A spouse's good points should be acknowledged along with dealing with his/her faults. **REV 2:1-7.**
 1. This will break down defensiveness as it lets your spouse know that you are fair.
 2. Defensiveness distorts perceptions and hinders mutual understanding. **PRO 18:19.**
- E. Verbal attacks should be avoided as these generate a defensive attitude in the one being attacked. **PRO 15:1.**
- F. Deal with the specific disagreement or fault.
 1. Avoid the "shotgun" approach of blasting away at your spouse, hoping that at least one of many pellets will get results.
 2. Trying to tackle everything at once is frustrating.
 3. Each issue that is resolved gives hope for resolving others.
 4. Don't expect overnight cures to long-festering problems.
- G. A spouse should not be confronted at a time when he/she is already tense from other pressures.
- H. Couples should try not to be oversensitive to the words, decisions and conduct of one another.
 1. Oversensitiveness generally stems from self-centeredness.
 2. True love is not self-centered and is therefore not easily provoked. **1CO 13:5.**
- I. In addressing the perceived faults of a spouse, a most basic rule must be remembered, namely, to love thy neighbour as thyself. **MAT 22:39.**
- X. Genuine love will perfectly bind a married couple. **COL 3:14; 1CO 13:4-7.**
 - A. True love does not look out only for itself. It seeks the welfare of its object. **1JO 3:16.**
 - B. True love suffers long; it bears and endures.
 - C. True love keeps believing and hoping.
 - D. If both partners have love like this in their marriage, it will work!