

## Living Word Fellowship Church

Pastor Paul Cannings, D. Phil.

### A Biblical Approach to Resolving Conflict in Marriage

#### I. The Biblical Importance of Resolving Conflicts

- A. God desires couples to **live in oneness** just like Christ and the church:
1. The man must wash his wife with the Word (Eph. 5:26). They are to have **one mind**.
  2. A believer must marry a believer (1 Corinthians 6:14-15). They must have **one Spirit**.
  3. God expects them to be **one flesh** (Genesis 2:24-25; Matthew 19:4-6; 1 Corinthians 6:15-16).
- B. If love does not begin in the home (Ephesians 5:25), there is no hope it continues in the church (1 Timothy 3:2-4).
- C. If a man does not love his family, the following occurs:
1. God **curse**s the land (Malachi 4:6).
  2. The man does **not find favor** with God during worship (Malachi 2:15-17).
  3. God does **not answer** his prayers (1 Peter 3:7).
- D. If conflict resolution is not taught by example in the home, **children grow up** without good problem-solving techniques.

#### II. Rules of Engagement

- A. Each person is commanded biblically to **respect the opinions** of others (anything that does not violate God's Word; Romans 14:1-10).
1. We are instructed to function in relationships without **grumbling and complaining** (Philippians 2:14; Colossians 3:12-15; 1 Peter 4:7-11; 1 Corinthians 10:10).
- B. We need to **actively pray** for one another (James 5:16).
- C. Do not use **unwholesome words** when responding to one another (Ephesians 4:25-32; 5:3-5). We are not allowed to **pay back evil** for evil (1 Thessalonians 5:15).
- D. Keep the Bite Out of Fights:
1. We must learn to reduce stress in our homes (Luke 8:14):

- a) We must develop a strong prayer life and worry less (Phil. 4:4-7).
  - b) **Ask for wisdom** when you pray (James 1:5).
  - c) **Reduce** worldly appetites (James 4:1-3; 1 John 2:15-17). Some marriages are stressed because they are constantly spending beyond their means.
2. **Manage the tongue**; it can control the entire body (Proverbs 10:19; 13:3; Eph. 29-32; James 3:2).
  3. Learn to manage anger (Ephesians 4:25-32; James 1:19-21):
    - Quick to listen.
    - Slow to speak.
    - Slow to become angry.
- E. We must **learn to forgive**. This is important for our own relationship with God (Matthew 6:14-15):
- a) Forgiveness is **submitting to the Word of God** as a guide for loving one another from this point on.
- F. Each person must **keep their family** out of it.
- G. We must do whatever it takes not to be a **stumbling block** to one another (Romans 14:13,19).
- H. We must be willing to demonstrate **sacrificial love** to one another (Romans 15:7; Philippians 2:1-5). Loving one another sacrificially is important for the following reasons:
- a) This exposes who is a **true disciple** of Jesus Christ (John 13:35).
  - b) This allows us to know who is sincerely in fellowship with the Spirit and committed to obeying God's Word (1 John 1:5-10; 4:12; John 15:1-5, 10):
    - This process results from continual spiritual growth (Galatians 5:22-26).
    - If we **come to know God**, love that comes from Him will come from us (1 John 2:2-5; 4:7-12; Matthew 22:36-40).

#### I. 12 Rules for Successful Conflict Resolution:

1. Examine yourself--admit your own faults.
2. Limit conflict to present--"DON'T USE YESTERDAY'S PROBLEMS FOR TODAY'S AMMUNITION."
3. Keep to one issue.
4. Use "I" messages.
5. Don't use character generalizations
6. Don't counterattack.
7. Don't mind read.

8. Deal with conflicts promptly.
9. Control your emotions.
10. Don't keep track of wins or losses. Remember, if one person wins in an argument, both persons lose.
11. Set foul limits.
12. Make some rules.

**\*\*\*TIME SPENT FIGHTING IS TIME WASTED; ONCE SPENT, IT BRINGS NOTHING BUT MEMORIES.\*\*\***

### III. Preserve Your Marriage Within God's Hedge

- A. Remember who is the true enemy (Ephesians 6:12):
1. Satan loves to **create doubt** even when speaking to God (Genesis 3:2; Job 1:9). God does not respond favorably when a believer doubts (James 1:5-9).
  2. Satan slanders believers (Rev. 12:10).
  3. He is busy counterfeiting God (2 Cor. 11:13-15) because it helps to pollute the world and keep **believers blind** (2 Peter 1:3-4, 9).
  4. **God limits** what Satan can or cannot do (Job 1:12; 2:6).
  5. Satan has the power to take someone's life (Job 2:6; 1 John 5:16). A person can **die prematurely** because of **defiant sin** (1 John 3:4-10; 1 Corinthians 11:27-32).
  6. Satan in Relation to Believers and the Church:
    - a) He will tempt Christians **to lie** (John 8:44; Eph. 4:25-27).
    - b) Satan seeks to switch scripture (2 Cor. 11:13-15).
    - c) If believers do not deal with **their anger** Satan gets a foothold (Ephesians 4:29-32).
    - d) He tempts believers to **immorality** (1 Cor. 7:5)
    - e) He seeks to **devour believers** who are not sober, alert, and self-controlled (1 Pet. 5:8) with life's worries and cares (Luke 8:14).
    - f) He tempts believers to **cover up** selfishness and be deceitful (Acts 5:1-11).
- B. Never alter God's Word (Genesis 3:4-5):
1. Satan knew what God said and switched things up so that it sounded truthful -- *"Indeed, has God said..."* (John 8:44).
    - a) Eve quoted everything Adam was told by God (2:15-17). She changed it to **"touch it"** and she left out **"surely"**. She did not keep what her husband taught her (1 Timothy 5:14).
- C. Make decisions based on **the truth** (Genesis 3:6);

1. Steps to a bad decision:
  - a) Woman saw the tree was good - Eve leaned to **her own understanding** – it was practical.
  - b) Delightful - it pleased her. She chose to satisfy **her own desires** (James 1:12-15).
  - c) Desirable – selfish desire – to wish for something that **does not** belong to us (Deut. 5:21).
  - d) He ate – he allowed Eve to **reverse the roles** God provided.
  
2. Always remember that **sin corrupts** what is good (Genesis 3:7):
  - a) *“Do not be deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.”* (1 Cor 15:33-34; KJV)

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

Marriage is God’s institution. We will enjoy marriage the more we enjoy God. This is why Paul says that we must be *“Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.”* (Ephesians 5:1-2 KJV)

Paul then continues saying that we must get drunk with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18-19) before he outlines Biblical principles for a godly marriage. Malachi says that a man who treats his wife treacherously, God will be a witness between the man and the wife of his youth. He continues by saying *“And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit.”* (Malachi 2:13-16 KJV)

To walk in the Spirit, because we take our spiritual growth seriously, produces the fruit of the spirit which is *“love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”* (Galatians 5:22-23 KJV) These ingredients are a blessing to every marriage. To grow in the Spirit allows God to be the strong tower in our marriage. This establishes and preserves the marriage making it safe from the destruction that living in the flesh can create. (Proverbs 18:10)

Remember, God serves as a witness between a man and his wife (Malachi 2:13).