

Lesson #4

RESOLVING MARITAL CONFLICT

During the month of February, we are studying the following four lessons on Marriage.

- **Origin of Marriage**
- **Husband's Responsibility to Marriage**
- **Wife's Responsibility to Marriage**
- **Resolving marital Conflict**

INTRODUCTION:

"An error doesn't become a mistake until you refuse to correct it." (Battisa) This quote explains one of the most important aspects of resolving marital conflict – refusing to correct it.

Our lesson text offers us five principles about resolving marital conflict (James 1:19-21).

- **Conflict** **Anger:** "For man's anger (orge) does not bring about the righteous life."
- **Choice** **Advise:** "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry."
- **Cast off** **Abolish:** "Therefore, get rid of (apotithemi/a.m.ptc.nplm) all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent."
- **Change** **Aim:** "Righteous life (dikaiosune) that God desires."
- **Challenge** **Acceptance:** "Humbly accepts (dechomai/a.m.impv.2pl) the word planted in you, which can save you."

This lesson will study FOUR aspects of Resolving Marital Conflict through good communications skills.

1. **Our lesson text begins by giving good advice on three communication skills (Eccl.3:7).**

Most marital counselors say that 75% of marriages need counsel on resolving conflict. James gives three important skills to improving marital communication.

- **Be quick to listen.** Don't interrupt! Interrupting means that you listen to talk rather than to learn. Listen twice as much as you talk (two ears and one mouth). Listen to what your mate is saying, rather than how your mate is saying it.
- **Be slow to speak.** Don't be hasty with your answers! It is wiser to choose what you say than to say what you choose. Question: Do you tend to dominate the conversation?
- **Be slow to anger.** Engage your mind before your mouth. Sensor your attitude more than your words. Question: Do you talk down to your mate? Do you tend to attack both your mate and the problem? (Prov.14:29; Eccl.7:8-10)

There are three ways people normally vent their anger.

- Aggressive – vent it out on mate.
- Passive – vent it in on self.
- Assertive – vent it towards the problem

When you are wrong, say so. When you are right, say nothing (Prov.17:28; 21:23).

“Like apples of gold in settings of silver is a word spoken in right circumstances. Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold is a wise reprover to a listening ear.” (Prov.25:11-12)

2. Marital conflict should make the marriage better not bitter.

Remember that marriage is a perfect institution with imperfect people. Marital conflict is inevitable. Even Adam and Eve had marital conflict when they were perfect.

A person’s desire for change will come from a sense of feeling loved and accepted. Marriage counselors report that 75% of marital conflict never gets resolved and 40% of them end in divorce. This leads me to think that a majority of couples don’t consider the institution of marriage as DIVINE (Matt.19:4-6).

Why is it that we seem to be able to resolve our dating relationship conflicts well enough to get married but don’t seem to be able to resolve our marital conflicts well enough to stay married?

Improving your marital relationship is not based on reforming your mate but by transforming your relationship by the renewing of your mind (Rom.12:2; Eph.4:22-24).

3. Offensive words make a person defensive and hostile.

Offensive words set us up for conflict and confrontation. Offensive words don’t reveal a great deal about our problem but do reveal a great deal about our person (Prov.10:19; 12:18).

Use healing words not hurting words. Don’t say things you will be sorry about later. Explain what bothers you but be skillful in how you explain it to your mate.

“Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.” (Prov.16:24)

When stating your feelings regarding a problem, begin with how it makes you feel. This gives your mate an opportunity to become a healer and to focus upon your need rather than become defensive. For example, it allows the husband to love, nourish, and cherish his wife (Eph.5:25-29).

“A man has joy in an apt answer and how delightful is a timely word.” (Prov.16:23) Learn to attack the hurt rather than the heart. Learn to say what you mean to your mate rather than say mean things to your mate. Avoid verbal jabbing!

Don’t blame your mate for how you feel about the problem. Focus on the facts more than on the feelings.

Don’t allow disapproval about marital problems become disapproval of marital mate (displaced aggression/ work, kids, finances, sickness, tired).

4. Good communication requires self-evaluation, mutual understanding, and cooperation to resolve marital conflict.

There is a Chinese proverb that says, 'It is better to light candles than to curse darkness.'

How you say what you see in you as well as in your mate is very important in resolving marital conflict. The following list of comparative words is an example [stubborn/determined, set in ways/ consistent, critical/ forthright, worry wart/ responsible, pessimistic/ realistic]. How do you see your glass (marriage) half empty or half full?

Good communication is the bridge over troubled waters. But it requires keeping the both ends of the bridge open. Always keep your end of the bridge open with interrogatives. Stay away from declaratives and ultimatives. Never begin with YOU when upset. Remember that you control what you think and what you think controls how you feel. Therefore, you can control how you feel by how you think (James 1:19-21).

**“MANY THINGS ARE OPENED BY MISTAKE,
BUT NONE MORE OFTEN THAN THE MOUTH.”**