



Conflict Management

In every marriage conflict is inevitable. Two people living in the same space will never agree on all things all the time. It is easy to miscommunicate in those times of conflict, even to the point where things become overheated. Most of the time it is simply a communication breakdown, and the resolution can be achieved. However, once tempers flare and certain words are spoken, resolution does not come easily.

Most people respond in two basic ways to conflict. They either choose fight or flight. They confront the situation head-on speaking exactly what pops into their minds regardless of the repercussions, or they retreat, either verbally or physically, not wanting to deal with the problem at all. Both methods, when taken to the extreme, can be harmful to a marriage. That is why the tool of conflict management is so important. It allows us to deal with the issue in a healthy way, to get closure, and move on. Did you know that there are rules for combat? You would think in war all bets were off, and you could do anything and everything you wanted. However, that is not the case at all. The rules that are in place for combat are called “rules of engagement.”

Rules of engagement (plural noun) a directive issued by a military authority specifying the circumstances and limitations under which forces will engage in combat with the enemy. These rules are in place so certain boundaries are not crossed and unnecessary suffering does not occur. I believe we can have our own version of these rules in our marriage. Ephesians 4 gives us the Biblical version of rules of engagement. We know conflict will come. Why not be prepared for it so we do not sin? Why not be prepared to fight fair by taking out things like slander and bitterness so you do not have to worry about regrets later? My husband puts it like this, “If you make rules in times of peace, they will be easier to follow in times of struggle.” By sitting down and creating your own rules of engagement based on Ephesians 4, you and your spouse will increase your chances of handling conflict correctly and avoiding unnecessary harm.

Prayer

Lord, I know conflict is inevitable in marriage. However, my spouse and I want to handle it the correct way. Give us self-control and the right words. Help us to establish our own rules of engagement and follow them when we don't see eye-to-eye. Above all, help us to always strive for unity and extend grace where it is needed so bitterness cannot grow in our marriage. Amen

Action

Sit down with your spouse (when you are not in conflict) and create “Battle Boundaries” and a “Delete List” for when conflict arises based on the Biblical principles found in Ephesians 4. Battle Boundaries are a list of rules you should follow during an argument. (i.e. No name-calling.) A Delete List is words you will not use again because they only cause more harm.