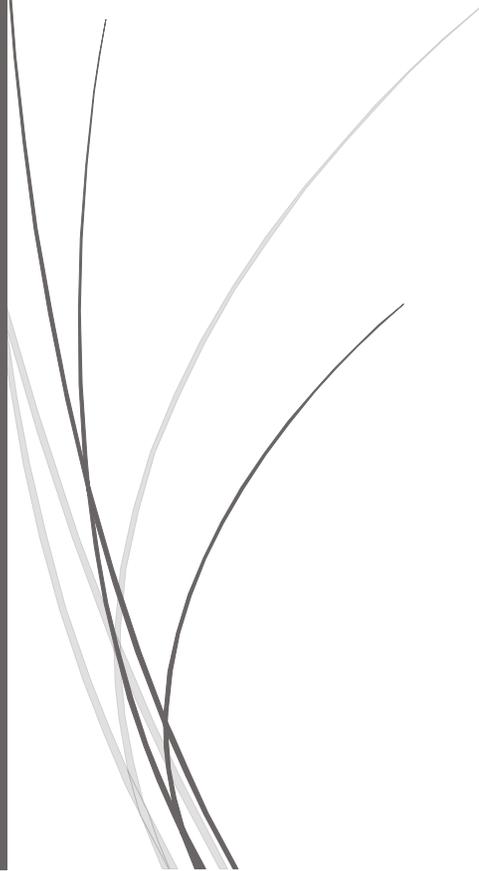


Lesson 8

**THE PATH TO SOUL  
SATISFYING LOVE**  
THE CHALLENGE OF CONFLICT



**Marriage**Helper





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## UNDERSTANDING HOW BOTH OF YOU CAN WIN...

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? (James 4:1)

It is inevitable; there will be conflict in every relationship. We want things to go as we wish and, if that is important to us, we fight for our idea if the other person wants things to go another way.

Human nature. We all have it. Selfish? Not necessarily, though sometimes it may be.

This conflict only becomes a problem when the people involved allow their disagreement to turn into an argument that does not solve anything and causes anger, hurt, or disappointment.

If you are not in a relationship, this chapter may seem irrelevant to you. However, it is valuable to you now. Whether or not you are in a relationship with a fiancé, boyfriend, or girlfriend, you have relationships with others who are close to you. It may be your family, best friend, co-worker, etc. The principles in this chapter apply to all arguments. If you are in a relationship, this chapter definitely applies to you now.

## BIBLICAL VIEW OF CONFLICT

God recognizes that conflict occurs between human beings. No matter how spiritual, pure, or focused, we eventually find ourselves in disagreement with another. Conflict does not mean one (or both) is evil. It is not disagreement we are to avoid, but disagreements done in the wrong way.

When one allows him- herself to become angry in conflict, trouble results. God speaks to this throughout the Old Testament, telling us how to handle our anger and deal with conflict productively.

- **Do not allow your temper to flare:** *He who is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who is quick-tempered exalts folly.* (Proverbs 14:29)

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- **Think carefully before responding to the one with whom you have conflict:** *A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.* (Proverbs 15:1)
- **Control your anger when disagreeing and you can bring peace to the contention:** *A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but the slow to anger pacifies contention.* (Proverbs 15:18)
- **Slow down and think before you speak:** *The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things.* (Proverbs 15:28)
- **Wise people know when to forgive and move on:** *A man's discretion makes him slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook a transgression.* (Proverbs 19:11)
- **Do not allow yourself to keep thinking about it (fret):** *Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret, it leads only to evildoing.* (Psalm 37:8)
- The New Testament continues the teaching:
- **Do not allow your anger to lead you to sin; deal with it quickly and move on:** *Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger.* (Ephesians 4:26)
- **In your anger do not slander the person with whom you disagree. Instead be kind, tender-hearted, and learn to forgive:** *Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.* (Ephesians 4:31-32)
- **Those who do not control anger do not “achieve the righteousness of God,” and have a worthless religion. S/he deceives self by thinking him- herself righteous yet not controlling his/her hurtful language:** *...let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God...If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless.* (James 1:19, 20, 26)

What happens to relationships in which conflict is not handled well? Consider this example in 2 Samuel. Michal, wife of King David, became enraged at his dancing in public, though David's intent was to dance before the Lord.

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- She chastised him: *Michal...came out to meet David and said, "How the king of Israel distinguished himself today! He uncovered himself today in the eyes of his servants' maids as one of the foolish ones shamelessly uncovers himself!"* (2 Samuel 6:20)
- He defended his dancing and then told her that he would be humble in his own eyes but distinguished in the eyes of those maidens. In essence, he told her that other women – even servants – gave him more understanding and respect than his own wife.
- *And Michal...had no child to the day of her death.* (2 Samuel 6:23)

How do we keep that from happening to our marriages?

## WATCHING FOR TRIGGERS

If you find yourselves in arguments that do not solve disagreements but rather lead to anger, hurt, or disappointment, we provide the first step in reframing that process. Nearly all arguments of the type we discuss have a trigger that begins the conflict. A trigger is an action – either verbal or physical – that sets the other person off. When a trigger occurs, the argument proceeds in a line usually such as this:

*trigger—disagreement/hurt/anger—argument—no mutually agreeable solution—bad feelings*

The progression may be different with some couples, but it usually applies to all nonproductive arguments. Think back over arguments you have had, especially those that repeat, and figure out the trigger that usually starts the argument.

Write here triggers that you do which causes your spouse to feel anger or hurt.

Write here triggers that your spouse does which causes you to feel anger or hurt.

If you communicate well, share your answers. When the other person tells you your triggers, you must not become defensive, disagree that it is a trigger, react with anger, stop the communication, or any other negative thing. Listen to understand.

Everyone desires peace in a relationship and in life. By examining the triggers in your relationship, and working to remove them, you step closer to peace. Remember, no one wants to get caught up in nonproductive arguments: *Better to live on a corner of the roof than share a house with a quarrelsome wife [or husband!]*. (Proverbs 25:24)

## WIN-WIN GUIDELINES

We use the word guidelines instead of rules because it may be that a particular couple should modify the guidelines to fit their personalities and situations.

These guidelines assume the argument is not just to hurt the other person, but that each person has a desire, idea, action, etc., that s/he wants the other to accept, tolerate, or do. In short, these guidelines provide a method for finding a solution.

1. Make the environment safe for each of you, both physically and emotionally.
  - a) Pick a location where neither of you will be self-conscious nor fear embarrassment. (For example, do not argue in a restaurant. Wait until you are in an emotionally safer place.)
  - b) Choose the right time. (For example: do not begin an argument when one of you must leave soon for an appointment or work.)



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2. Operate within issue boundaries – deal with the issue at hand.
  - a) Do not bring up any current issues that are not directly related.
  - b) Do not bring up any past issue unless that is all you are discussing.
  
3. Seek to understand before being understood.
  - a) Do not argue your point strongly at the outset. If you do, the other person may yield, not because of mutual agreement, but to cease the conflict. That nearly always results in resentment.
  - b) Listen carefully for the other person’s point of view. You may discover it is not too different from your own if you truly listen to what the other person wants to accomplish.
  
4. Use non-judgmental brainstorming.
  - a) Using the knowledge of each other’s position (gained in step three), together brainstorm potential solutions in which each of you “wins.” (If your argument is over opposing ideas, the win may be that each of you accepts that the other person sees it differently but that you will not let it negatively affect your relationship.)
  - b) Ensure that no brainstormed idea is countered by sarcasm, derision, defensiveness, or any other negative. Make sure that each of you gets respect for every idea, no matter how foreign it seems to the other.
  
5. Find a mutually agreed upon solution.
  - a) Do not cease searching for a solution until each enthusiastically agrees.
  - b) To please both of you, choose a possible brainstormed solution that you both enthusiastically agree will provide a “win” for both of you.

6. Implement the mutually agreed upon solution.
  - a) When you find a solution on which both of you enthusiastically agree, together make a plan to employ that solution.
  - b) Agree to the plan when it begins, and honor that agreement.
  
7. Alter the solution as needed.
  - a) If the agreed upon solution does not work to resolve the issue, discuss it to discover why.
  - b) Go backwards through the seven steps, one at a time, to find the alteration that you need to make to have a mutually acceptable solution.

Together examine the above suggested guidelines. If you wish to alter any of the guidelines, remove one, or add one, please do so if that step works best for you as a couple.

## FORGIVING

There are actions or words from one partner that the other cannot get past easily. It may be something such as embarrassing the other in public. It may be an extramarital affair. We do not equate each of these actions, but we do wish to point out that forgiveness may be needed in any number of situations.

Forgiveness is not an emotion; it is a decision. That decision will affect your emotions, though it may take time for it to do so. Be sure to check out our [eBook on Forgiveness](#) for more information.

*Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven." (Matthew 18:21-22)*



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List here the people you need to forgive and what they did that requires forgiveness.

Will you forgive? You may repeat the process below with many people, if necessary.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

1. Do you choose to decide that this person is not evil but a flawed human?
2. Do you choose to give up your right for vengeance (even if you have pursued vengeance until now)?
3. Do you choose to restore a relationship with this person? If so, write here what you need to do to restore that relationship, as well as anything you feel s/he needs to do to restore that relationship.

## IN CONCLUSION

Solving problems and finding happiness together is one of the most important skills required to maintain a relationship. Learn to do it well and a relationship can last for a lifetime.

Sometimes what one may consider a problem has to be solved by accepting and tolerating the ideas, beliefs, and opinions of another. That does not, of course, mean that you must tolerate his/her destructive behavior to self, you, ones you love, others, or even the relationship.

Rather than harboring anger or resentment, work together to solve all disagreements and problems.



## MOVING ON

After the next section **Daily Thoughts and Prayers** are questions that you need to answer before sharing with your spouse.



## DAILY THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS

### DAY ONE

Spend a few minutes meditating and talking with God about things He has forgiven you for over the years. Jot your thoughts here.

The one thing that I will make sure I pray about today that will help me control my emotions, especially anger is...

### DAY TWO

Spend a few minutes meditating and talking with God about things that you have forgiven others for over the years. How did your forgiving affect you? Jot your thoughts here.



The Challenge of Conflict

The one thing that I will make sure I pray about today that will help me control my emotions, especially anger is...

### DAY THREE

Spend a few minutes meditating and talking with God about things that trigger anger, resentment, or negative reactions in you. Jot your thoughts here.

The one thing that I will make sure I pray about today that will help me control my emotions, especially anger is...

### DAY FOUR

Spend a few minutes meditating and talking with God about things that trigger anger, resentment, or negative reactions in your spouse (or another person close to you.) Jot your thoughts here.



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The one thing that I will make sure I pray about today that will help me control my emotions, especially anger is...

## DAY FIVE

Spend a few minutes meditating and talking with God about how you would like to act, be, and do when conflict comes into your life. Jot your thoughts here.

The one thing that I will make sure I pray about today that will help me control my emotions, especially anger is...







## NOTES AS YOU WATCH THE VIDEO



## MARRIAGE HELPER

If your marriage is in crisis—or if you love someone whose marriage is in crisis—our success rate since 1999 is three out of four marriages. It doesn't matter if one spouse comes reluctantly or under pressure. It doesn't matter if one is madly in love with someone else. Our success rate remains just as high. It is, of course, by the grace of God Almighty.

If you wish a miracle for you or someone you love, call now toll free 866-903-0990 or visit us at [www.marriagehelper.com](http://www.marriagehelper.com).