



# MARRIAGE WORKSHOP

Kingdom Within Ministries

## INTRODUCTION

How to deal with conflict in a Godly manner. And to understand why there will be conflict and disagreements in relationships. But also receiving the answers and guidance from the Holy Spirit regarding our marriages.

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## **Conflict in Relationships**

As people we always think that we will be able to resolve any future differences between ourselves and others. Especially if we are friends or married.

In the marriage we divide some of the responsibilities and take on new challenges. The first problem arises when we no longer make decisions together. At times there are irritations between husband and wife and disagreements regarding a decision made which was not approved by the other one. This will often cause drifting further and further apart even if we try and keep things together. The problem with this is that it leaves the door open for distrust, avoiding each other and disagreements, often.

Human beings are social creatures.

Whenever two or more of these people get together, there are interpersonal relations. Often these relationships are compatible, mutually supportive, respectful, and characterized by clear, concise and efficient communication.

Beginning in early childhood, we chafe (scratch) at authority, rules, regulations, and cultural traditions, but when we get free of these constraints, we can become more isolated and uncertain about our actions and future directions.

In this information age, with its many technical devices to aid communication and interaction, we still misunderstand each other, fail to resolve conflict or get along, and often feel alone. How people get along with each other, or how and why they don't get along, are issues that concern all children of God.

### **Bible, conflict and interpersonal relations**

The Bible records a long human history of interpersonal problems and communication breakdowns. Adam and Eve, the first married couple, had a disagreement about the reasons for their sin in the Garden of Eden.

Although the Bible records many examples of interpersonal conflict, this is never condoned. On the contrary, dissension and interpersonal strife are dealt with honestly and principles for building or maintaining good relationships are mentioned frequently. The Book of Proverbs, for example, instructs us to hold our tongues and avoid slander, tell the truth, speak gently, think before we talk, listen carefully, resist the temptation to gossip, avoid flattery and trust in God. Unrestrained anger, hasty words, personal pride, dishonesty, envy, the

struggle for riches and a host of other harmful attributes are mentioned as sources of tension.

Paul warned Timothy not to be quarrelsome, especially over unimportant things; and in other Bible passages there are instructions to live in harmony, demonstrate love and replace bitterness and wrath with kindness, forgiveness and tender-hearted actions. After a warning against those who cause trouble because they do not control their tongues, James notes that quarrels and conflicts come because of personal lust and envy. In listing practical guidelines for living, Paul instructs his readers to “never pay back evil for evil to anyone,” to live in harmony with each other, and to “do your part to live at peace with everyone, as much as possible.”

Jesus and the biblical writers were peacemakers who dealt with conflict in a straightforward way but who taught by their example and words. They expected believers to be peacemakers as well.

As we ponder the many biblical statements about conflict and interpersonal relations, several themes are obvious.

### **1. Good relationships and conflict resolution begin with Jesus Christ**

Peace with God comes to people who pray about everything, put their trust in God, ask Him to take control of their lives and expect that He will give the peace that the Word of God promises.

### **2. Good interpersonal relations depends on people**

Relationships can be maintained and conflicts can be managed when people are willing to work together to resolve their differences. The Bible often puts greater emphasis on the attitudes and characteristics of the person involved in the disagreements.

For real peace to be felt within or to occur between individuals, there first must be a peace with God. This comes when individuals commit their lives to Christ and have regular times of worship, prayer and meditation on God's Word. Changed thoughts and actions often follow.

### **3. Good interpersonal relations focus on issues**

Interpersonal tensions can arise because people have different attitudes, personalities, prejudices, values or styles. People accept each other and learn to get along despite their different personalities, traditions or working styles.

#### **4. Good interpersonal relations involve determination, effort and skill**

People don't always get along automatically even when they are committed believers. The Bible and psychology agree that good relationships depend on the consistent development and application of skills, such as listening carefully, watching, understanding oneself and others, trying hard to communicate accurately and refraining from unkind comments or emotional outburst.

#### **5. Interpersonal conflicts can build maturity**

With God there are no shortcuts to maturity. There also is no possibility of avoiding real-life situations. And life always brings some measure of conflict, even real battles. But God is always with those He chooses to:

- a) bring them through the battles
- b) bring them to new understanding of Himself
- c) shape their character in new and fresh ways

Conflicts are God's means of developing character, especially faith in Him.

#### **Causes of conflicts and problems in interpersonal relations**

Why do people have difficulty getting along with each other? The major causes can be summarized into several categories:

##### **1. satan's influence**

Although many people deny or laugh away his existence, the devil and his legions are powerful, evil schemers whom believers are instructed to resist in the name of Jesus Christ. Satan "takes an informed interest in all believers' relationships and schemes either to bring about their downfall or to pollute them". At the core of interpersonal conflict always lies the subtle and manipulative hand of the enemy.

##### **2. Personal attitudes, attributes and actions**

Interpersonal tension often begins to escalate with people whose personality traits, attitudes, perceptions, feelings, mannerisms and behaviour create conflict and distrust. The faults that hinder good interpersonal relations include:

- a) A self-centred need to be noticed, to be in control, to have one's own way, or to have money, prestige, and status.

- b)** A nonforgiving, bitter attitude
- c)** A tendency to be hypercritical, judgemental, and angry
- d)** An insecurity that involves feelings of threat, fear rejection, and a reluctance to trust others
- e)** An unwillingness or inability to “open up” and share one’s feelings and thoughts.
- f)** A failure or unwillingness to recognise and accept individual differences
- g)** Rigid expectations about what others should be like, how they should act or lead, or what values they should hold.

### **3. Lack of commitment**

### **4. Communication failure**

Even when two people want to communicate, however, there can be reasons for failure:

- a)** The sender is unclear in his or her own mind about the message
- b)** The sender is afraid, ashamed, deceptive, unsure, or otherwise reluctant to send a clear message.
- c)** The sender does not put the message into clearly understandable words or gestures
- d)** The sender says one thing but communicates a different message by his or her behaviour
- e)** The sender mumbles, yells, or in other ways distorts the message so it is not sent clearly
- f)** The receiver is unable to understand the message

Even when the communication process begins clearly, the receiver responds with facial features, gestures, and verbalizations, often before conscious awareness, can cause the sender to change the words or tone of the message, even in midsentence.

## Marriage Issues

It should be remembered that marital conflict often is a symptom of something deeper, such as selfishness, lack of love, unwillingness to forgive, anger, bitterness, communication problems, anxiety, sexual mistreatment, substance abuse, feelings of inferiority, sin, and a deliberate rejection of God's will.

### The causes of marital problems

In Genesis 2:24, we read that in marriage a man "leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one." Over the centuries maybe millions of sermons have been built around this verse, focussing on the three verbs. The man *leaves*, the couple is *joined*, and the *two become one*. These could be viewed as the three purposes of marriage.

Leaving involves a departure from parents and implies a public and legal union of husband and wife into a marriage. When the couple has made this public commitment, they have a greater reason to give themselves to building a committed relationship. Being joined is from a Hebrew word that means "to stick or glue together." Like two pieces of paper that are glued together, the couple cannot be pulled apart without one or both being torn. When a couple is dedicated to loving, drawing together, and remaining faithful to each other, the bond is strong and more likely to last.

Becoming one involves sex, but it goes beyond the physical. It means that two people share their dreams, hopes, fears, material possessions, thinking, feelings, joys, difficulties, successes, and failures. It does not mean that the two personalities are squelched, obliterated, or so merged that each person's uniqueness is gone. These distinctive personalities and traits persist, but they are developed in partnership with those of one's mate to make a complete relationship. People want happiness and the opportunity to realize their potential, build careers, and have fulfilled lives.

### Marital problems can be placed into 3 categories:

**1. Some things surprise couples** - This may be most true for people who marry without knowing each other well, but surprises even come to couples who have dated or been engaged for a long time prior to the wedding.

Surprise one: Unfulfilled expectations

Surprise two: Disappointing sex

Surprise three: Faulty communication

Surprise four: Unhealthy relationships

Surprise five: Unwise choices

Surprise six: Secrets

**2. Some things undermine couples** – When two people marry, each comes with perhaps two or more decades of past experiences, secrets, and ways of looking at life. Each has perspectives that are not shared by the other, and sometimes, even when there is a sincere desire for compromise or synthesis, couples still have difficulty resolving their differences. The problems are more complicated if either or both partners have an unwillingness to change, and insensitivity to the other person's viewpoints, or a refusal to acknowledge the differences. These can be issues that quietly sneak up on a marriage and undermine relationships often before anybody sees what is happening. The issues include the following;

a) busyness – When lives get too busy, marriages and other relationships suffer. We struggle to manage our time, our careers, our families, or our calendars, but despite our best intentions, we can lose our spouse in the rush.

b) Role confusion

c) Inflexibility - There can be difficulties, however, if one or both of the partners are rigid, unwilling to give or strongly resistant to change. When couples are too busy or too rigid to work at building and enriching their relationships, problems are likely to develop.

d) Religion - The Bible warns of problems when a believer and an unbeliever try to blend together in marriage.

e) Value differences – How should we spend our time and money? What are our goals? These questions concern values – the issues that are really important in life. When a couple has similar values, marriage is often healthy and growing. When values are in conflict, the relationships may be one of tension, power struggles, and mutual criticism. Value conflicts are at the heart of many marital problems. They sneak up, undermine stability, and sometimes appear when they are least expected.

f) Conflicting needs

g) Personality differences

h) Money and debt

i) Boredom

j) A weakening emotional bond

**3. Some things jolt couples** – At times, every marriage experiences jolts. An unexpected medical crisis, a sudden death, a discovered infidelity, a natural disaster, a deep disappointment, a financial or career collapse – these are among the crises that can throw a family into turmoil and severely shake the stability of even the best of marriages.