

3 Principles to Help Resolve Conflict in Your Marriage

In Genesis 2:24, God says, "And they will become one flesh." This statement clearly alludes to God creating something entirely new; the creation of a new flesh from two individuals so they can become this new creation called marriage.

One characteristic of becoming one flesh is conflict. You will inevitably have conflict. This conflict is also a precursor to change and growth toward becoming one flesh.

I want to share with you a brilliant principle God gave to Lisa and me very early in our marriage which reduced a significant amount of potential conflicts over the 25 years we have been married.

Here is the principle, "If I am doing it, I am doing it right. If you criticize me, you get to do it."

So here is how this principle works practically. Let's visit the major disagreement of folding socks. Lisa likes to ball up the socks when she folds laundry. I like my socks just folded, not balled up like a dog toy.

If Lisa is folding laundry and I complain, she can ask me—politely of course—if I would like to fold all the laundry. If I continue to complain even one word after that, I get to fold the laundry.

Likewise, if I am folding the socks—not balling them up like a dog toy—and she complains after I ask her if she wants to fold all the laundry, she gets to do this.

This is great for Lisa and me. We are both competent adults. We are both great problem-solvers, and we respect that in each other.

There are usually three ways to do something, so if my way isn't right and hers is wrong, it's just her way. And if I prefer to do it differently, I need to put my energy into doing it instead of asking her to conform to my way of doing things.

Conflict will be a part of becoming one flesh. When you have conflict, I would encourage you to follow a few principles to make it as smooth as possible:

1. **Stay focused on one problem at a time.** A spouse who moves to several problems to confuse their opponent rarely effectively solves problems. If you're arguing about socks, stay only on socks; don't bring dishes, their childhood, interest rates or something that happened three years ago into it. Couples who fight in that way get angrier quicker, place blame and take longer to reconnect. Honestly, it feels like a war zone when a couple does this in my office.
2. **Before you solve a problem, make sure you hear each other's heart.** This means discuss the feelings you have about the problem. Even something as small as socks can make someone feel disrespected, unheard, unimportant or misunderstood. Finding the feeling is part of hearing the heart of the other person. This can save you hours of arguing if you can hear one another's heart.
3. **Brainstorm.** When you get to the solution side of a conflict, a great question to ask is, "What three ideas do you have to solve this problem?". This question allows you to utilize your creativity and a larger portion of your brain to solve a problem as opposed to sharing your first idea and bullying your spouse to submit to what may not be the best idea at all. Having three solutions gives you both the confidence that at least some thought went into truly solving the problem.

Remember the problem is the problem, and people are the solution. God created you both to solve problems and if you're

still stuck, or better yet, before you get to that point of getting stuck, stop and pray for God to reveal some solutions. Honestly, some of the best solutions came when Lisa and I prayed about it. After a good night's sleep, the next day, the solution became obvious to us both, and some of the previous ideas were not the best decisions.

Use these principles to resolve conflict in your marriage and continue on your journey to becoming one flesh. {eo}

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