

Why Conflict Is Your Friend, Not Your Foe

Conflict is inevitable. We're human, so it makes sense that sometimes we're going to disagree, argue and get ticked. Right? While conflict is uncomfortable, it can be transformational. Author Michael Hyatt says, "See conflict not as a problem to be managed or resolved, but as an opportunity to strengthen the common life." That's great advice. What if we shifted our anxiety over conflict to viewing it as an opportunity to strengthen the relationship?

Jesus understood conflict. Though He Himself was perfect, He lived a life in our very imperfect world, and friction seemed to follow Him. (Consider John 8:1-11, 18:28-38 and 21:15-18 as examples) When in conflict, He didn't panic. His palms didn't get sweaty, and His breath didn't grow short. He didn't hide from skirmishes or run from scuffles. He remained calm and confident, ready to move forward and strengthen each relationship.

In order for you and me to follow His example, we need to first pause and pray. Often in conflict, your adrenaline speeds up and you talk faster. Instead, pause and pray that the Holy Spirit will allow you to listen with a heart that seeks to understand and strengthen the relationship. When you do talk, speak slowly, using these three phrases:

"Help me Understand": In conflict, it's easy to think through all the reasons you disagree with what's being stated. Instead, focus on understanding the other person's point of view. Stay curious and ask them to help you understand their perspective. Listen for something to agree with. For example, maybe you feel frustrated because your spouse over-spent. Rather than exploding, seek to understand. What was the motivation behind the spending? By seeking to understand,

you'll be able to move closer to a shared goal, and your spouse will feel less attacked.

"Tell me more": I have to warn you: This is counterintuitive. When in conflict, the natural thing to do is to talk more to prove your point. But that's not going to help you reach your shared goal. Instead, when someone is frustrated or angry, ask the other person to tell you more. Allow them to completely finish dumping their point of view. This does two things: It allows the other person to finish their tirade, and it saves you from the wasted effort of trying to prove your point. Here's the thing: When a person is ticked and frustrated, they need to dump their thoughts. They can't even hear your perspective when they're angry. So instead, do yourself a favor and allow them the freedom to dump. You can always respond with "Thank you for sharing your view; I'll take some time to pray about this."

"I value my relationship with you": This is perhaps the most important phrase to use in a conflict. When you're in a conflict, it's essential to communicate "I will take this seriously because I value our relationship." Conflict leaves people feeling insecure. By reassuring them and saying, "I value our relationship and I want to strengthen it," you'll alleviate anxiety and insecurity. In the end, you'll walk away with a much more fulfilling relationship. It's a win-win, both for you and the other person!

Hey—I challenge you. Try out these phrases this week and let me know how they work for you. And I'd love your thoughts! What has helped you navigate conflict? Leave a comment below!

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