

Joyce Meyer: How You Can Avoid the Dangers of Strife

We've all experienced the effects of strife in one way or another. Strife can manifest itself through arguing, screaming and yelling. Other times, it can be more subtle, like when someone gives you "the silent treatment" and refuses to talk at all.

The dictionary defines strife as "bickering, arguing, a heated disagreement, or an angry undercurrent."

I think the most dangerous form of strife is an angry undercurrent because it's not as easy to recognize. It's something you can feel in the atmosphere. You know something's not quite right, but no one wants to address it. Maybe nothing is specifically said, but it's quite clear that everything is not okay.

In the early years of my marriage, I perfected the art of arguing with my husband, Dave, without having to say a word. I spent entire Saturdays stomping around the house and cleaning every room, ignoring him for hours at a time. Thankfully, Dave was a peacemaker and mature enough to not give in to my tantrums.

Our enemy, Satan, works relentlessly to try and fill our lives with strife because he knows how powerful it is when God's children walk in peace and unity.

Psalm 133:1a (NIV) says, "How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!" It goes on, in verses 2-3, to give an illustration of what unity is like.

This psalm tells us that unity brings the anointing and God's blessing. The anointing is the presence and power of the Holy Spirit to help us in every area. We need the anointing to

raise our children, perform well at our jobs, have a successful marriage and simply enjoy our lives.

Conversely, if there is not unity—if your home or business is full of strife—you will not have the anointing and God's blessing.

First Peter 3:11b (AMPC) says, "[Do not merely desire peaceful relations with God, with your fellowmen, and with yourself, but pursue, go after them!]"

"Pursue" is a strong word. It implies making an effort and taking action. If we're really going to pursue peace, we can't wait around for everyone to come apologize to us. Chasing after peace means resolving issues quickly and even apologizing to others when we don't feel like it.

Romans 12:16 says, "Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty (snobbish, high-minded, exclusive), but readily adjust yourself to [people, things] and give yourselves to humble tasks. Never overestimate yourself or be wise in your own conceits."

Living in peace requires us to take responsibility for our own thoughts and actions. We're going to have to humble ourselves and do some adapting and adjusting.

I learned a tough lesson in this area. A few years ago, Dave and I were in an art store at the shopping mall. Dave found a picture he really liked for our house, but I didn't like it at all.

He really wanted it, but I wouldn't give in. I argued until he finally said, "All right, just do what you want."

At first, I felt smug and congratulated myself on the victory. Then, right there in the mall, the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart and said, "You think you won, but you lost."

It pierced my heart. I knew right then that I was wrong. If

Dave really liked that picture, there were plenty of places we could have hung it. At the very least, I could have been more loving in how I handled the entire conversation.

Pursuing peace requires compromise. We should never compromise our beliefs or what God tells us to do, but we will be required to compromise our preferences and desires in order to truly love others and keep strife out of our relationships.

Living in peace will also require us to sacrifice our pride. We all like to be right and win every argument, but being right is highly overrated! We may win the battle, but when we insist on having our own way at the expense of a relationship, we do tremendous damage.

Always remember, real love gives up its right to be right. If you truly want to have a healthy marriage or strong relationships with others, I recommend that you learn to say (and sincerely mean) this statement: "I think I'm right, but I may be wrong."

Even if you know you're right, you don't always have to argue about it and prove your point. It's true that some things are very important, and you need to stand your ground. But there are so many things in life that just don't make a difference.

You won't always agree with your spouse, family or friends, but you can still respect and appreciate them. And as you do your part to "keep the peace," God will not only honor your commitment, He will also bless your life in greater ways than you can imagine.

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