

Avoid Conflict or Embrace It - June 2025

LWCC marriage Ministries Email For June 2025

Greetings again from your Marriage Ministries Team. In the way the seasons have this habit of rolling around, this past month we have certainly known we're in the midst of winter's grip once again. We trust that as you've navigated the month you have been able to steer clear of the myriad of winter ailments that can trip us up. With that in mind, let me ask you a question: How are you managing those annoying marriage 'ailments' that like to try to trip us up? Do you hide them from each other, or just try to avoid them?

There's no doubt most of us prefer to ignore conflict. In fact most of us would prefer to have none at all. We would much rather keep the peace. Sadly for some couples, staying silent feels like the safer option because of the struggle they have when conflict arises.

Unfortunately, we need to keep in mind that conflict is inevitable, but you must understand it does have its place. Part of human nature since 'The Fall' is that we will fall out, or have moments of disagreement, or times when we don't see eye to eye. And sadly, when you and your spouse don't see eye to eye on an issue, if you don't have a healthy appreciation and understanding around disagreements and conflict, it's going to lead to some friction. Another absolute is simply that avoiding friction won't make it go away. In fact, hiding your hard feelings can, and usually does, have the opposite effect: it creates an undercurrent of compounding issues.

Embrace it - don't go into a tailspin:

Too often when we find ourselves in conflict mode, whether it's a moment of disagreement, we just don't see eye to eye, or feel uncomfortable about something that our spouse has just said or done, we get very uncomfortable and or begin to either withdraw or react. And so often, without realizing what has just happened, we inflame the situation. Our spouse knows us well, senses our response and does likewise - almost like they are programmed (and sadly, you both are) to react. And before you know it, you are thinking "here we go again". Don't Fall Into The Trap.

Number one: *Remember* - "We wrestle not against flesh and blood" - in this case, our spouse - "but principalities and powers" (Eph.6:12), and before you go yeah, yeah, trust me, it is that simple. So number 2, Push back!!! Don't be sucked in. If you're suddenly feeling uncomfortable, ask yourself why. If your initial response was defensive, or with attitude, or your body language sent a message, choose now to press the Stop button. Own it with your spouse. Tell them, "I'm sorry I reacted to that. Can I process what you.....(said or the way you put that)....and come back to you in a couple of minutes." Hopefully what follows will give you some ideas on how you might Embrace the moment, and help you both revolutionize the way you approach Conflict going forward.

Avoiding Conflict Makes Problems Worse:

You might not think so, but avoiding conflict generally creates more volatility, not less. Burying feelings creates a proverbial minefield, and often as a result, emotional explosions burst to the surface when you least expect them. If you do manage to keep your emotions in check, the lack of openness and honesty brings with it a certain amount of emotional undercurrent of mistrust and

disconnection. So if any of these scenarios belong to you, then let's see if we can give you some further practical advice and ideas that will hopefully put this one to bed once and for all. Because, if you do get tripped up with this issue and get upset from time to time with your spouse, believe me, it is important to find a way to work through the avoidance, the tension and emotion, and get to a place of mastering those moments when conflict arises.

have a conflict strategy:

It might feel scary to initiate difficult conversations, but if you had a strategy to handle conflict, you'd eventually build confidence in your ability to handle yourself better, without all that nervous tension and insecurity. And let's face it, if you can achieve that, it has to be worth an awful lot. When conflict erupts and emotions run high, you want to be able to handle the situation in such a way that you both feel safe, and not exposed to one another's volatility and emotion, and again, that's what having a strategy in place is all about.

- First of all, Pause - ask yourself, "Why am I feeling upset about this?" Is it the issue I don't agree with, or is it the timing, or is it the way it has been presented. Figure out why you are upset.
- Make a decision to see every conflict moment in the context of "We wrestle not...." Remind yourself, I am not going to fall into the enemy's trap - satan, that is, not your spouse!!!!
- Check the moment. Is this the best time to try to resolve the issue or disagreement. Do either of us have something pending that could influence or interrupt seeing this through to resolution right now. So often one of the biggest contributors to the escalation of a 'moment' is not the issue itself, but the fact that it simply caught us at the wrong moment. If so, ask for a 'pause' and schedule a time that suits you both to come back to it, and make sure you stick to the arranged time. Don't forget, or leave it open-ended.
- Gently reveal your feelings and be honest. It's okay to tell your spouse you're upset. These conversations don't have to be loud, loaded, or emotional. They just need to be constructive and open. If you've stopped and thought it through, you also give yourself a better chance at being constructive and more able to express your feelings, and therefore contribute to a less emotionally charged encounter.

What to Do Before a Hard Conversation

Good conflict resolution is rooted in feeling fully present, relaxed, and non-anxious. This is easier said than done, but it's possible. You can start off on the right foot by taking some important steps before initiating a difficult conversation, particularly if you have parked resolving the conflict to a more convenient time.

Before you begin to resolve the conflict:

- Make sure you're well rested. If you're sleep deprived, don't try to talk about the issue.
- Get something to eat. Trying to resolve a problem on an empty stomach can make things worse.
- As already mentioned, schedule your conflict. If one of you is worried about a pending appointment or work deadline, you've got other important stuff on your mind right now, or family stuff is mounting up in the midst of a the disagreement, it's going to be harder to solve the issue.

- Be open, in the midst of your discussion, to taking a time-out. If things get heated, or you're shutting down and struggling to engage, it's okay to take a time-out and come back to resolve it in a little while once you've had a chance to calm down.
- Agree on when to continue. Don't leave the argument open-ended if you've taken a break; decide when you're going to pick back up on the conversation, whether it's in a few minutes or a day or so.

Finally, take some time to reflect on your response to conflict. Why do you feel depressed or drained when facing a disagreement? What example did your home life set for you growing up? You may need to do some inner work and personal reflection to help you resolve future conflict in a healthier way.

What If You're Married to a Conflict-Avoider?

Maybe you're married to someone who buries their feelings. It's important to create an environment where conflict resolution feels safe. If you're married to someone who avoids conflict, how can you gently encourage them to resolve issues together?

- Start by reassuring them that conflict doesn't mean the end of your relationship. Some individuals, possibly because of passed experiences, feel anxious about disagreements and try to avoid them because deep down, they may be afraid of losing you.
- Demonstrate through your actions and communication that you're not going anywhere. You can practice with small conflicts, such as losing the car keys or remote control. Working through small conflicts will build your confidence as a couple and show you both that these issues aren't as bad as you assumed.
- If your spouse avoids conflict, consider how they grew up. What was their home life like? How did their family handle conflict growing up? Chances are, they haven't seen healthy conflict resolution demonstrated.

As you effectively manage your way through conflict, it allows you both to get to know one another on a deeper level and, in turn, helps build trust and confidence that, should conflict arise in the future, you can navigate your way through it successfully. We trust that these past two month's contributions have given you some good tools that will significantly impact your relationship going forward.

Blessings again from your Marriage Ministries Team at LWCC: Stan & Ronnie, John & Karen