



## Better Marriage

### WEEK 2 DISCUSSION GUIDE

#### Overview

In message two of our *Better* series, we learn how to effectively communicate within a marriage.

#### Discussion Questions

Blame shifting and “he said, she said” are not new issues in marriages; this goes all the way back to the garden of Eden with Adam and Eve, the first married couple. If we grew up watching our parents or family handling conflict in a healthy way, we have a good model to use; however, if we observed matters being handled in an unhealthy way, we will continue these bad habits if we do not commit to finding better ways.

#### Three Common Types of Conflict Resolution

- 1. Turtle:** Those who handle conflict in a “turtle style” react to problems and conflict by retreating into their shell. They wait until some time has passed, and then they stick their head out of their shell again.
- 2. Wasp:** Those who handle conflict in a “wasp style” react to problems and conflict by invading and attacking out of nowhere. They will inflict stings in the form of harsh words and biting comments.
- 3. Roadrunner:** Those who handle conflict in a “roadrunner style” react to problems and conflict by hitting the road (withdrawing) physically and/or emotionally.

Identifying the way you typically react to conflict is a good first step to breaking an unhealthy pattern.

- Have you noticed yourself reacting to conflict in your marriage or relationships as a turtle, wasp, or roadrunner?

Conflict is natural, so we cannot avoid it. We can look to the Bible for healthy ways to handle it and break bad habits of how we may have handled it before. The foundation to handling conflict in a natural way is learning how to effectively communicate. **Colossians 4:6** says, **Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.**

## Four T's of Reconciliation

### 1. Communicate Truthfully.

**Ephesians 4:25** says, **Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another.** It is important to avoid exaggerating and rationalizing when communicating with your spouse. Be honest and truthful.

- Are you speaking truthfully to your spouse and others close to you?
- Turtle Style Conflict Handlers: work on communicating clearly how you feel without retreating and withdrawing. Roadrunner Style Conflict Handlers: slow down, and address what's going on.

### 2. Communicate Tenderly.

**Proverbs 15:1** says, **A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.** We are to speak the truth in love. Here are ten ground rules for fighting fair:

- Never compare.
- Avoid absolutes.
- No name calling.
- Never challenge your spouse using money, intimacy, or the threat of divorce as leverage.
- Never change lanes.
- Never play the reporter.
- Drop the scorecard.
- Don't psycho-analyze.
- Don't play the historian.
- Never quit.

### 3. Communicate Timely.

**Ephesians 4:26-27** says, **"Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil.** The Bible does not say we cannot or will not ever get angry. It directs us to not sin as a result of that anger. This is a classic Scripture for how married couples should handle conflict because it directs us to deal with conflict as soon as possible, before the sun goes down. Conflict that is not addressed only becomes bigger and bigger.

- Are you comfortable with addressing issues as soon as they arise, or do you find yourself letting issues fester?

### 4. Communicate Tactfully.

**1 Corinthians 14:33** says, **For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.** We need to use tact in our communication with our spouses.

- Do you communicate in a manner with your spouse or others that you would want him/her to communicate with you?

## Life Challenge

Talk with your spouse about the ground rules of fighting fair. Commit and promise each other that you will abide by these rules when handling conflict in your marriage. This week, when you need to confront someone, go to God in prayer first.

## Prayer

*Father, bless our marriages and friendships. Be the center, and grow each of us closer to You as we grow closer to one another. Amen.* Pray for the specific needs of the group.