

We Will Work Through Our Problems Together

Message 1 of 4 in the series: "Tighten the Knot"

A. Even in loving Christian relationships, conflict between men and women is inevitable.

1. Men and women think differently.

"There are three things that amaze me—no, four things that I don't understand: how an eagle glides through the sky, how a snake slithers on a rock, how a ship navigates the ocean, **how a man loves a woman.**" Proverbs 30:18-19 (NLT)

2. All men and women are born with fallen, sinful natures.

"...you will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you." Genesis 3:16b (NLT)

"Not a single person on earth is always good and never sins." Ecclesiastes 7:20 (NLT)

"So I say, **let the Holy Spirit guide your lives.** Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. **These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions.**" Galatians 5:16-17 (NLT)

B. Jesus wants us to love each other and resolve our differences.

"Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing." 1 Peter 3:8-9 (NIV)

"...**submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.** For wives, this means submit to your husbands as to the Lord... For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her." Ephesians 5:21-22 & 25 (NLT)

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." Matthew 5:9 (NIV)

C. Seven steps couples can take to resolve conflicts and work through problems together:

1. We can schedule an appropriate time and place for discussion.

"If another believer sins against you, **go privately** and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back." Matthew 18:15 (NLT)

Note: Avoiding/denying conflict is not the same as resolving conflict. "And 'don't sin by letting anger control you.' Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a foothold to the devil." Ephesians 4:26-27 (NLT)

2. We can clearly define the problem or issue of disagreement.

"...the people were all shouting, some one thing and some another. Everything was in confusion. In fact, most of them didn't even know why they were there." Acts 19:32 (NLT)

We can focus on:

- **one issue** rather than many issues
- **the problem** rather than the other person
- **specifics** rather than generalizations
- **actions/behaviors** rather than motives

3. We can admit how we have each contributed to the problem.

"How can you think of saying to your friend, 'Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the log in your own eye? Hypocrite! **First get rid of the log in your own eye;** then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye." Matthew 7:4-5 (NLT)

Note: A good apology is, "I'm sorry, I was wrong. Please forgive me."

4. We can get rid of harmful behaviors that sabotage our ability to resolve conflict/solve problems (yelling, name-calling, profanity, sarcasm, betrayal of confidences, bringing up past issues that have already been resolved, etc.).

“Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.” Ephesians 4:31-32 (NLT)

5. We can brainstorm for new solutions.

- We can put our heads together. “Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed.” Ecclesiastes 4:9 (NLT)
- We can seek wise counsel. “Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.” Proverbs 15:22 (NIV)
- We can pray together for wisdom. “If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking.” James 1:5 (NLT)

6. We can agree on a solution to try and agree on how we will each work toward the solution.

“Can two people walk together without agreeing on the direction?” Amos 3:3 (NLT)

“Then make me truly happy by **agreeing wholeheartedly with each other**, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.” Philippians 2:2 (NLT)

7. If our solution works, we can celebrate. If it doesn’t, we can start over.

“Then Peter came to him and asked, ‘Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?’ ‘No, not seven times,’ Jesus replied, ‘but seventy times seven!’” Matthew 18:21-22 (NLT)

“Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and **it keeps no record of being wronged**. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.” 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (NLT)

D. The Holy Spirit will give us the desire, power, endurance, patience, etc. we need to love each other, forgive each other, and change.

“For God is working in you, giving you **the desire and the power** to do what pleases him.”

Philippians 2:13 (NLT)

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Connect Group Questions:

1. How was conflict handled in your home while you were growing up (I never saw my parents fight, my parents yelled and cursed when they were mad, mom and dad would give each other the silent treatment, etc.)? How do you think your upbringing has impacted the way you handle conflict?
2. Read Genesis 3:16, Ecclesiastes 7:20, & Galatians 5:16-17. Why do you think Christian couples who love each other often struggle with resolving conflict?
3. Discuss the following 7 steps couples can take to resolve conflicts/solve problems:
 - We can schedule an appropriate time and place for discussion. (Matthew 18:20)
 - We can clearly define the problem or issue of disagreement. (Acts 19:32)
 - We can admit how we have each contributed to the problem. (Matthew 7:4-5)
 - We can get rid of harmful behaviors that sabotage our ability to resolve conflict/solve problems (yelling, name-calling, profanity, sarcasm, betrayal of confidences, bringing up past issues that have already been resolved, etc.). (Ephesians 4:31-32)
 - We can brainstorm for new solutions. (Ecclesiastes 4:9, Proverbs 15:22, James 1:5)
 - We can agree on a solution to try and agree on how we will each work toward the solution. (Amos 3:3, Philippians 2:2)
 - If our solution works, we can celebrate. If it doesn’t, we can start over. (Matthew 18:21-22, 1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

Which of these steps is easiest for you? Which is hardest?

4. Why do Christians believe that sinful people can change and broken relationships can be mended? (Philippians 2:13)

Helpful Resources:

“The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict.” by: Ken Sande, Baker Books / 2003.

“Living Reconciled: 7 Ways to Bring Peace to Your Most Difficult Relationships.” by P. Brian Noble, Baker Books / 2022.