

RESOLVING CONFLICTS IN MARRIAGE **(James 1:19-20)**

1.Listen up (Be swift to hear).

- a.The old saying goes, God gave us two ears and one mouth so that we listen twice as much as we talk.
- b.You and I know that is rare in any human being.
- c.There is an art to listening and I know that I have a lot to work on in this area but we all need to learn this art.
 - i.We don't do it automatically.
 - ii.We have to train ourselves to listen to what our spouse is saying.
- d.When we truly listen, this gets our spouse open to really talking to us and communication is vital to marriage.
 - i.It causes us to be closer to one another.
 - ii.If our spouses think we aren't listening to them, they won't open up and we won't be able to understand the problems they are having.
- e.When we understand, we become closer and gain a level of intimacy with one another that goes a long way toward making us the one flesh God said we must be.
- f.There are some things that hinder listening.
 - i.Getting defensive if our spouse brings up a fault of ours.
 - (1)Ego can get in the way of a great marriage.
 - (2)We don't always know best.
 - ii.We think we know what is going to be said.
 - (1)How many times have you been in a discussion, maybe a loud one, with your spouse and one of you cut the other off and said something like, "I know what you're thinking" or "I know what you're going to say."
 - (2)It can be very tempting to try and finish their sentences for them and this does nothing but make it worse.
 - iii.We are already getting our answer ready.
 - (1)When something is brought up, before the comment is even through being stated by our spouse, we are already coming up with a rebuttal.
 - (2)We've tuned them out to come up with our defense for whatever we did.
- g.There are some keys to becoming a good listener.
 - i.Observation.
 - (1)We've got to listen with our eyes as well as our ears.
 - (2)Look at the body language of your spouse.
 - (3)Look into their eyes and see their emotions.
 - (4)This at least gives the appearance of you trying to listen.
 - (5)If we are staring off at something else, they have every right to believe we aren't listening.
 - ii.Concentration.
 - (1)Focus on what your spouse is saying.
 - (2)Experts tell us that we only retain 25% of what is heard only.
 - (3)Because of that, we need to really pay attention to what is being said.

iii. Consideration.

(1) Words have meaning don't they?

(2) Consider the choice of words that are used by your spouse.

iv. Clarification.

(1) We don't automatically know exactly what our spouses mean when they say certain things.

(2) Too many times we assume we do.

(3) Ask for clarification about something or restate what they said while asking to make sure that is what they meant.

(4) A lot of conflicts intensify because we make assumptions about what is meant and end up being wrong.

h. We must learn how to hear to help resolve conflicts.

2. Shut up (Slow to speak).

a. Words can get us into trouble can't they.

i. The Proverbs writer had much to say about this.

ii. Proverbs 10:19, 17:27, 21:23.

b. We must restrain ourselves from speaking at times, and especially rashly or in the heat of the moment.

c. The thing is, when we are talking, we aren't listening, and when we aren't listening we aren't learning.

d. The guide for our speech, when we do speak, is 1 Corinthians 13:4-6.

e. There are some definite no-no's when we do speak:

i. Don't become a judge and start passing blame.

ii. Don't become a degrader by talking down to your spouse or as if you are superior to him or her.

iii. Don't become a psychologist, saying something like, "Well, I know why you are feeling this way..."

iv. Don't become a historian and bring up all the faults and follies your spouse has committed over the course of your marriage and dating lives.

v. Don't be a bully, which can lead to abuse, either verbal, emotional, or physical.

vi. Don't become the critic and compare your spouse to someone else (husband to her father, or wife to her mother, or someone else's spouse).

vii. Don't become the preacher and use the Bible as a club.

f. Most times, if we would take the time to think about what we are going to say before we say it, we would avoid a lot of our conflicts.

3. Lighten up (Slow to anger).

a. We can't go flying off the handle and expect conflicts to be resolved.

i. Ecclesiastes 7:9.

ii. Proverbs 16:32.

b. One translation says, "be slow to take offense and to get angry".

c. Our anger leads us to sin, and this is in every area of life (Proverbs 29:22).

d. Since we are going to have conflict at times and we are striving to avoid anger, there are some considerations that we need to make when conflict arises:

i. Notice the time:

(1) Did you know over 50% of conflicts occur right before a meal?

- (2) Another time conflicts occur at a higher than normal rate is right before going to worship on Sunday morning.
- (3) The next highest rate of conflict occurs right before going to some get-together or party.
- (4) We are at our highest levels of anxiety at those times and we need to be very careful of what we are doing and saying at those times.
- ii. Notice your tone.
 - (1) How many times has your spouse said, "It's not what you said, it's how you said it"?
 - (2) Someone once said, "Keep your words soft and sweet because you may have to eat them at some point."
 - (3) The way we say something is either going to be an ignitor or douser of the flames.
- iii. Notice the turf.
 - (1) Never fight in public.
 - (2) Don't make smart remarks in front of friends or family when you know your spouse won't say anything back to you.
 - (3) All that does is make you a cheapshot artist.
- e. Instead of being angry, practice accommodation.
 - i. More than likely, you both like different things.
 - ii. Take the time to learn about what your spouse likes.
- f. Instead of being angry, practice acceptance.
 - i. You aren't going to change a person in order to love them.
 - ii. Loving them may lead them to change but it must come first.
 - iii. If you aren't married yet, don't get married to someone you hope to change or for what you think they may become because they may never become that and that will be a source of conflict.
 - iv. Accept them for who and what they are, the person to whom you committed your life.
- g. Instead of being angry, practice adjustment.
 - i. If you love your spouse and there is a problem, adjust your life and lose the any selfishness.
 - ii. Both parties need to be adjustable though.
 - iii. If one person is always changing and the other demands change but refuses to do any him or herself, that marriage is doomed,

Outline from a sermon by Adrian Rogers.