

# Sunday School

## Counseling Marriage Problems Resolving Conflict

### Introduction

1. What makes a marriage miserable is not conflict, but unresolved conflict. Conflict is not always bad.
2. Unresolved conflict breeds other sins.

### I. What is Conflict?

- A. Other words – strife, discord, contention, fight, quarrel, dispute. A state of hostility, antagonism, or animosity.
- B. Definitions  
*Conflict happens when you are at odds with another person over what you think, want, or do (Sande and Johnson, Resolving Everyday Conflict).*

### II. The Source of Conflict

James 4:1-3

*James is saying that quarreling comes from our desires, our wants. Ultimately, we fight because we want things. . . Quarrels come from us. We fight because we want to become to important that are willing to sin over it. (Parr, Healing Contentious Relationships).*

“Quarrels don’t just happen. People make them happen.” Kevin DeYoung

- Notice the cycle - your pleasures wage war in your members  
*Where do the conflicts and where do the quarrels among you come from? Is it not from this, from your passions that battle inside you? (Jam 4:1 NET)*
- There is something that we want, something we think will make us happy.  
*Like a neurotic and therapeutically shelf-worn little god, the human eart keeps ending discussions by insisting that it wants what it wants. (Cornelius Plantinga, Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin)*
- Those desires, those expectations are unmet, so we go to war.  
You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. (Jam 4:2 NIV)

*All our desires and passions are like an armed camp within us, ready at a moment’s notice to declare war against anyone who stands in the way of some personal gratification on which we have set our hearts. (Alex Motyer, The Message of James).*



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### III. What Are these Desires and What is the War?

The conflict can escalate (See Peacemakers Slippery Slope)

### IV. Conflict is often sinful in origins. But unresolved conflict is often the result of pride and selfishness.

Proverbs 13:10; 1 Timothy 6:4

### V. Resolution of Conflict

A. If we have a miserable marriage, it is right to want our marriage to change. But what that usually means is that I want my spouse to change.

*True resolution* will not happen until I want to change. It will not happen until I want to change.

B. I must want a marriage that glorifies God, *but more than that*, I need to want to be a spouse who honors and glorifies God.

C. Self-distrust and Self-Examination

So I must ask myself

- 1) What is that I want that I am not getting that makes me want to go war?
- 2) How am I waging this war?
- 3) How am I judging my spouse in this conflict? - Matt. 7:1-2
- 4) Where is my sin in this? - Matt. 7:3-5

D. Confession and Repentance

1. I own my own sin
2. I make an unqualified confession
3. I repent before God and my spouse

E. Response

1. If the spouse is a Christian, they will respond with grace (Eph. 4:32) and also own their own sin, confess, and repent. When this happens, reconciliation has happened, and now must be guarded (Another lesson).

2. If the spouse weaponizes confession and repentance, you may need to think about Matt. 7:6.

\*Reciprocation might be slower than we want, but our repentance is not determined by what is or isn't reciprocated.

