



HOW TO HANDLE CONFLICTS

Preaching and Teaching Resources

ADRIAN ROGERS





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How to Handle Conflicts

SERMON REFERENCE: James 1:19-20

LWF SERMON NUMBER: #1922

God made husbands and wives different so that He can make them one in marriage. Because of these innate differences, arguments are inevitable.

James 1:19 reveals how to handle conflicts: "So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath..."

We must be swift to hear, or quick to tune in.

Only by listening can we begin to understand each other, and be brought back into a place of emotional intimacy.

When in conflict, remember four things as you listen to your spouse:

Observation: Be perceptive; listen with your eyes as well as with your ears, reading body language. Rather than looking away, lean in to show you are listening.

Concentration: All too often, we are thinking about other things rather than our spouse's words. As loving mates, we should instead give them our full attention.

Consideration: Think about what the other person is saying. Don't assume you already know what is going to be said, or try to catch your spouse in an error; instead, listen to what is said and also to what is meant.

Clarification: After the other person has spoken completely, restate what was said, to make sure you understand what was meant.

Second, we must be slow to speak, or tone it down.

Our tongues will often get us into trouble. Having two ears and one mouth, we should listen twice as much as we speak.

When in conflict, some spouses like to play judge or professor. Some play psychologist or historian, dictator or critic. Some might even play the self-righteous preacher. But as believers, we must remember that love is what controls our language.

Adrian Rogers says, "Watch your words; keep them warm and sweet because you may have to eat them."

Finally, we must lighten up, or be slow to wrath.

Unwarranted anger severely damages the home; it is not a weakness, it is a wickedness. When facing marital conflicts, don't run away, give in, or get fired up. Instead, find the right time, with the right tone, at the right place. Rather than being right and losing, compromise and gain together.

Married life may never get easier, but if we learn to deal with each other lovingly, it will get sweeter.

Life Application

Are you facing conflicts in your marriage today? Take the words of James 1:19 to heart: tune in, tone down, and lighten up. Practice acceptance, accommodation and adjustments together.



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1) INTRODUCTION

- a) There are many differences between men and women.
 - i) We are wired differently physically, emotionally and psychologically.
 - ii) We are also different as individuals.
 - (1) We have different temperaments.
 - (2) We come from different family backgrounds.
 - (3) We have different traditions, thoughts and habits.
- b) The real issue is not if we are going to get into conflicts, but how we settle them.
 - i) Rather than being married by the Justice of the Peace, some couples seem to have been married by the Secretary of War.
- c) We need to learn how to handle conflicts, how to fight fair and how to deal with anger.

2) WE NEED TO TUNE IN (James 1:19-20)

- a) We need to be quick to listen.
 - i) We need to learn what the other person is saying
- b) There are many reasons why we need to obey God's Word and be swift to hear.
 - i) When we listen, we encourage the other person to talk.
 - ii) It also helps us to understand.
 - (1) We cannot understand someone we are not listening to.
 - (2) When you understand your spouse, it will bring you closer together.
 - iii) It will help to achieve intimacy.
- c) There are also many reasons why we do not listen.
 - i) We are very defensive.
 - (1) Because of our ego, we do not want to hear; we do not want anyone telling us anything.
 - ii) We assume we already know what the other person is going to say.
 - iii) While the other person is talking, we're thinking about what we are going to say next and how we are going to answer them.
- d) How do we need to listen?
 - i) By observation.
 - (1) Listen not merely with your ears but also with your eyes.
 - (a) Look your spouse in the face, even if you're in an argument.
 - (b) If you are not looking at him or her, then he or she may assume that you are not listening or interested.
 - (c) When we watch someone, we can read their body language and facial expressions.
 - (d) Look into the other person's eyes.
 - (i) It has been said that the eyes are the mirror to the soul.
 - (ii) You can see joy, fear, anger and confusion.
 - ii) With concentration.
 - (1) Listen with your mind.



- (2) Focus on what the other person is saying.
- (3) If we are egocentric or pre-occupied, we will not concentrate on what the other person is saying.
- iii) With consideration.
 - (1) Think about what your mate is saying.
 - (a) Consider the words your mate uses and the meaning behind those particular words.
 - (2) Do not jump to conclusions.
 - (a) Sometimes your spouse will use words he or she didn't really mean and communication becomes twisted.
 - (3) Listen to what your spouse means; absorb the feelings.
- iv) With clarification.
 - (1) Think it through until you get it straight.

3) WE NEED TO TONE DOWN (James 1:19)

- a) We need to be slow to speak.
 - i) Words will get us into trouble.
 - ii) Proverbs 10:19
 - iii) Proverbs 17:27
 - iv) Proverbs 21:23
 - v) Ecclesiastes 5:3
 - (1) Speech is silver, but silence is golden.
 - (2) When we are talking, we cannot be listening; and when we are not listening, then we are not learning.
- b) 1 Corinthians 13:4-7
 - i) This passage shows us how we should speak when we do speak.
- c) These are some destructive games that husbands and wives sometimes play:
 - i) The judge
 - (1) We want to be the judge, jury and executioner.
 - (2) We play the blame game and blame our mate.
 - (a) Adam blamed Eve in the Garden of Eden.
 - (i) Genesis 3:12
 - (3) Rather than saying, "You always" or "You never," we should say, "I feel" or "It seems to me."
 - (4) Playing the judge is not kind.
 - (a) 1 Corinthians 13:4
 - ii) The professor
 - (1) The professor always acts superior and talks down to the other person.
 - (2) The professor's conversations are filled with criticisms and put-downs.
 - (3) When you talk down to someone, you are attacking their self-worth, and they will become defensive.
 - (4) You cannot play the professor and be full of love.
 - (a) 1 Corinthians 13:4
 - iii) The psychologist
 - (1) The psychologist assumes that he or she understands everything about the other individual.
 - (a) "Let me tell you why you said that..."



- (2) We are not to assign motives to another person; only God can do that.
- iv) The historian
 - (1) We are not supposed to keep a record of wrongs.
 - (a) 1 Corinthians 13:5
- v) The dictator
 - (1) This individual wants to rule by a show of force.
 - (2) Never make ultimatums to your spouse.
 - (3) Never make veiled threats.
 - (4) A dictator may try to coerce another individual:
 - (a) By physical coercion; physical abuse.
 - (b) Men may withhold money in order to be the dictator in the family.
 - (c) One spouse may withhold affection.
 - (d) Sometimes the martyr will sulk.
 - (5) Playing the dictator is absolutely cruel, and you are saying to the other person, "I can do a better job with your life than you can."
- vi) The critic
 - (1) The critic compares his or her mate with other people.
 - (2) But the Bible says that love does not behave unseemly.
 - (a) 1 Corinthians 13:5
- vii) The preacher
 - (1) 1 Corinthians 13:6
 - (2) Love does not use the Bible as a club.
- d) We are to guard our tongue, listen carefully and speak wisely.

4) WE NEED TO LIGHTEN UP (James 1:19)

- a) We are to be slow to wrath.
 - i) Do not get upset so easily.
 - ii) Be slow to take offense and get angry.
- b) James 1:19 does not tell us to never get angry.
 - i) Ephesians 4:26
 - (1) Jesus was angry but never sinned.
 - ii) Mark 3:5
- c) How can we be angry and sin not?
 - i) Be angry for the right reason.
 - (1) Jesus was angry at sin.
 - (2) The way to be angry and to not sin is to be angry only at sin.
 - ii) Be angry at the right things.
 - (1) Be angry at the sin, not the sinner.
 - iii) Be angry in the right way.
 - (1) Let your anger move you to do something about a situation that is wrong.
- d) We are not to have an uncontrolled temper.
 - i) A person who has an uncontrolled temper is very foolish.
 - (1) Ecclesiastes 7:9
 - ii) Someone who has an uncontrolled temper has a very weak character.
 - (1) Proverbs 16:32



- iii) An uncontrolled temper will lead to sin in your marriage and professional life.
 - (1) Proverbs 29:22
- e) If you have an angry mate:
 - i) Do not practice avoidance.
 - (1) Do not suppress or ignore the situation.
 - ii) Do not practice appeasement.
 - (1) It is a very unhealthy marriage when one mate, in order to have peace, always gives in.
 - (2) A marriage is in trouble when one mate seems to dominate or always gets his or her way.
 - iii) Do not practice aggression.
 - (1) Do not give anger for anger.
 - (2) Speak the truth in love, never sarcastically.

5) CONCLUSION

- a) If you have an argument:
 - i) Have it at the right time.
 - (1) Most arguments occur just before we eat, when blood sugar is lower.
 - (2) Many arguments occur on the way to an event.
 - ii) Have it in the right tone.
 - (1) Keep your words soft and sweet.
 - iii) Have it on the right turf.
 - (1) Don't discuss problems with your mate when other people are around.
- b) Three things to remember:
 - i) Practice accommodation.
 - (1) Accommodate yourself to the other person.
 - (a) This is not compromise.
 - (2) Learn something about his sport or her hobby.
 - ii) Practice acceptance.
 - (1) Do not try to change your mate.
 - iii) Practice adjustment.
 - (1) Be willing to change.
 - (2) If one spouse wants to go to bed earlier, go to bed earlier.
- c) Everyone needs three homes:
 - i) A family home
 - ii) A church home
 - iii) A heavenly home
 - (1) Jesus Christ is the key to all three homes.
- d) Do you know Jesus personally? If not, you can pray to Him today by asking Him to come into your life.
- e) Call upon Jesus today. Repent (turn) from your sins, and turn to Jesus. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and acknowledge Him as Lord of your life.
 - i) Romans 3:23
 - ii) Romans 10:9-10
 - iii) Romans 10:13
 - iv) Acts 16:31
 - v) John 3:16



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Would you take your Bibles and open your Bibles to James chapter 1, we're going to begin reading in just a moment in verse 19. Now we've been talking about intimacy in marriage and how to achieve it. And we've been saying that we have to work at it because we're so different.

We've been talking about the differences in the sexes, and men and women are just wired differently. Physically, emotionally, psychologically, we're different. Then not only are we different that way, but as individuals we're different. We have different temperaments, and often opposites attract. And then on top of that we come from different family backgrounds, and we bring different traditions and different thoughts, different habits to the marriage. We're very different.

Joyce and I are very different. Now we're very much in love, but folks, we are very different. I did not realize how different we were when we were children growing up together, and we have known each other since the fourth grade. But as we got older I began to discover those differences. Upon a time we were on a ferris wheel, and we were out having a wonderful time, and we got on this huge ferris wheel, and it stopped, and our car was right at the very top, and for some reason the ferris wheel stopped and we were sitting up there with nothing to do. So I thought it would be a good idea to rock the car back and forth. I discovered that we are very different.

And I have been discovering those differences down through the years, but I have been enjoying the differences. But I want to say this, and I want to be very honest with you today, and honesty sometimes hurts. Joyce and I have sometimes had some very lively discussions. I mean we have known what it is to debate with our mate, and it is common to get into these things whether you're saved or whether you're lost, and whether you're in the ministry or out of the ministry.

Now the real problem is not whether or not we're going to get into conflicts, but the real question is, how do we settle them? Now some folks don't do a very good job of settling their conflicts. I believe rather than being married by the justice of peace, they were married by the secretary of war, and that war just goes on right on through the marriage. So I want to talk to, today about how to fight fair, how to handle conflicts, and specially how to deal with anger.

Look in verse 19, "Wherefore my beloved brethren, wherefore my beloved brethren let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." Another word for wrath is anger. "For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." Now in this passage, very brief, there are some of the most incredible, wonderful words for husbands and wives to resolve conflicts. But of course, not only husbands and wives, for anybody to resolve conflicts if we'll learn to do these three things. Now first of all he tells us here to be quick to listen. Look if you will in this verse again, in verse 19, "Wherefore my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear." Now what he's saying is this: that we need first of all **to tune in**.

Do you know why God gave us two ears and only one mouth? We oughta listen a whole lot more than we do. And we specially need to learn to listen to what the other person is saying.



Now I have an occupational hazard, and that is that I am a preacher, and I like to talk. And as a result, I'm not necessarily a good listener, but I am learning. Notice I said I am learning, not that I have learned, I am learning to listen. And I would say a word to all of us, wives or husbands: learn to listen.

Now let me tell you why you need to do what God's Word says here, to, "Be swift to hear." Number one, when you do listen, **you encourage your spouse to talk.** Now if he or she has the idea that you're not listening, they're not going to want to talk. And so when you listen, you encourage them to talk. Well, what good does that do? **It helps you to understand.** You cannot understand somebody that you're not listening to. And when you understand your mate, it follows as night follows day that understanding is going to bring you closer together. **You're going to achieve intimacy.** You don't have to be a rocket scientist to understand that.

Now the reason that many of us don't listen is, number one, we're so defensive. Our ego is there. We don't want to hear, we don't want anybody to tell us anything. Number two, we assume we already know what they're going to say, and we finish their sentence for them before they ever get to the end to finish it. And number three, while they're talking, we're thinking about what we're going to say, and how we're going to answer what they're going to say, so we're not really even hearing what they're saying, we're preparing our own little speech at this time. The Bible says we need to learn to listen.

Now let me tell you how to listen. Let me give you some words. The very first word is: **observation.** Listen not merely with your ears, listen with your eyes. Do you find it difficult to talk to somebody who's looking away from you? When your spouse talks, even if you're in an argument, look straight in their face. If you're looking at them, they have every right to assume that you're listening to them. If you're looking away, they probably will assume that you are not listening to them; you're not interested in them.

You see, when you watch a person, when you watch a person, when you listen to a person and you look at that person, you can tell things about them. You can read their body language. You can read their facial expressions. Look into a person's eyes. The poets have said it and it's true, that, "The eyes are the mirror of the soul." You can see joy, you can see fear, you can see anger, you can see confusion by looking into a person's face. So listen by observation. Lean forward, be interested, and it will pay great dividends.

But now listen. Not only observation, but: **concentration.** This is very hard for me, to focus on what the other person is saying. To concentrate and to listen, not only with your ears and your eyes, but with your mind. And especially if you're tired, if you're stressed, if you're pre-occupied, or again if you're egocentric, you're not going to be concentrating on what your mate is saying. As a matter of fact, psychologists tell us that we really get about twenty percent of a conversation. It is amazing how much people fail to hear what is being said.

As a matter of fact, I can put this down as a certainty. If you will get a copy of this message and listen to it after you've sat here in this congregation and listened to it, you will hear many things that I said that you never heard. They will go right past you because your mind will check in and check back and check out and check in again, and we simply check in and out to get a tone of what is saying and then our minds go off somewhere else.

Now what happens in church happens also in conversations between husbands and wives. And so you've got to focus, you've got to concentrate. That's the reason I encourage people to listen to a message



with an open Bible and with a notebook and make notes, even if you never use the notes. To listen, to write down, to hear what is being said. Learn to concentrate on your mate. Now listen, I'm talking about observation, I'm talking about concentration.

Here's the third thing: **consideration**. Think about what your mate is saying. You have got to listen with your mind. Turn it over in your mind. Think about the words that they use. Why did they choose those particular words? Think about the meaning behind those particular words. Don't jump to conclusions. Sometimes your mate will use words they don't really mean. Sometimes they'll get it twisted. And you say, "Ah, ha, you said it wrong." That makes no difference. Listen to what they mean, not what they say. Absorb the feelings. Consider what is being said. Learn to listen.

And then not only must there be that observation, not only must there be that concentration, not only must there be that consideration but here is something very, very important. When you listen, there has to be that **clarification**. Think it through till you get it straight. Sometimes after Joyce and I have had a conflict, I will go to my study and write down what I think I heard. To clarify, to get it in my mind.

Folks, it is hard to communicate. You'd have to be a preacher to know just how hard it is to communicate. I want you to listen to this sentence. Now just listen to it, and see if you know what I'm saying after I have finished it. Here's what one mate says to another, "I know that you believe that you understand what you think I said, but I'm not sure you realize what you heard is not what I meant." Do you understand that? Listen to it again, "I know you believe that you understand what you think I said, but I'm not sure you realize what you heard is not what I meant." Now a sentence like that helps you understand just how hard communication is.

So here's rule number one, here's rule number one. Listen to it. Tune in. Husbands, tune in to her. Lady, tune in to him if you would learn how to resolve conflicts. You ready for rule number two? Number one, tune in.

Rule number two, **tone down**. Listen to it again, "Wherefore my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear," that's tune in, "slow to speak," tone down. Your words are going to get you into trouble. I've learned that. Proverbs 19, Proverbs chapter 10 verse 19, "In the multitude of words, there wanteth not sin, but he that refraineth his lips is wise." Proverbs 17 verse 27, "He that hath knowledge spareth his words." If you're smart, you're not going to talk so much. Proverbs 21 verse 23, "Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue, keepeth his soul from troubles." Folks that's not Adrian, that's the Word of God!

Be slow to speak. Ecclesiastes 5 verse 3, "And a fool's voice is known by the multitude of words." Speech is silver, but silence is golden. Now when you are talking, you can't be listening, and when you're not listening you're not learning. And so the Bible says we're to be, "Swift to hear, we are to be slow to speak."

Now I said that God gave us two ears and one mouth. The old rabbis used to say God gave us both ears, they're out, they're exposed, they're easy to be seen, but God put our tongue behind some iron bars, guard it; inside to show that we ought to listen twice as much as we speak.

Now, I just want you to put your bark, bookmark there in James, and I want you to turn to First Corinthians chapter 13 with me for a moment, and let me show you how you must speak when you do speak. He's talking here about love. And I want you to read in First Corinthians chapter 13 verses 4 through 7, "Love suffereth long and is kind, love envieth not, love vaunteth not itself, it's not puffed up,



doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.”

Now, with that in mind, remember that all of First Corinthians 13 is actually talking about the tongue. By the way, the tongue is a subject that’s in everybody’s mouth. Did you know that? He’s talking about the tongue, He’s talking about the tongue, and He gives us some rules for using our tongue. Now this would apply everywhere, but it certainly applies in marriage.

With these verses in mind, I want you to think of some destructive games that we play between husbands and wives. Sometimes we want to play **the judge**. We want to be the judge, the jury, and the executioner. And we want to play the blame game and blame our mate.

It goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden when Adam wanted to blame Eve. We assign guilt, we say, “It’s all your fault, you should be ashamed.” Listen, if you in your marriage find yourself talking to your mate saying words like this, “You always” or, “You never.” That’s so destructive. Don’t ever begin the sentence with, “You-this” or, “You-that,” because what you’re doing, you’re playing the judge, and that’s not kind. The Bible says, “Love is kind.” Rather than saying, “You always” or, “You never,” why don’t you say, “I feel” or, “I need” or, “It seems to me.”

I want to list some words here and I want you to listen to them and see if these words sound like your conversations: “I told you so.” “You’re just like your father.” “You’re just like your mother.” “You’re always in a bad mood.” “You just don’t think it’s your fault.” “What’s wrong with you?” “All you ever do is complain!” “I can’t do anything to please you.” “You’re getting just what you deserve.” “Why don’t you listen to me?” “Why can’t you be more responsible?” “What on earth were you thinking?” “You are impossible.” “I don’t know why I put up with you.” “If you don’t like it, you can just leave.” “That was stupid.” “All you ever do is think of yourself.” “You’re such a baby.” “You deserve a dose of your own medicine.” “Why do you think you always have to be right?” Sound like anybody you know?

If those are words that come into your conversations, here’s the game that you’re playing. You’re playing the judge. Sometimes the jury and sometimes the executioner. But the Bible says, “Love is kind.”

Now, there’s some folks who don’t play the judge. Here’s another game they want to play. They want to play **the professor**. Do you know who the professor is? He’s the one who always acts superior. He’s the one who always talks down to the other person and his conversations or her conversations are filled with constant put-downs. Things like: “That’s stupid” or, “That doesn’t make sense” or, “Why don’t you just think and listen to me for just a little bit?” Or, “You wouldn’t understand that because, after all, you’re a woman” or, “You wouldn’t understand that because you’re a man, and men are so stupid.” Sometimes women just put it in one sentence, “Men.” Just one word. Now that means men just don’t have the capability to understand. And you assume that you as the professor are the one who knows everything.

One man said to his wife, said, “I can’t understand how God made you so beautiful and so stupid at the same time.” She said, “That’s easy. God made me beautiful so you would be attracted to me. He made me stupid so I’d be attracted to you.” Playing the professor, talking down. You see, when you talk down to somebody, what you do is, you’re attacking their self-worth or self-esteem, and they’re going to get defensive, and an argument’s going to begin. Now here’s another but, but the Bible says, “Love vaunteth not itself.” Do you see that? You can’t play the professor and be full of love.



And then, here's another game. You want to play **the psychologist**, and that's another destructive game. You're puffed up, and love is not puffed up, but you assume that you understand everything about the other individual and you say, "Let me tell you why you said that." Or, "Let me tell you what you were thinking. Do you know why you think that way?"

Now folks, the Bible says, "We're not to judge somebody else's heart." You're not a psychologist to psychoanalyze another person and to assign motives to another person. Only God can do that. Don't play the judge. Don't play the professor. Don't play the psychologist.

Here's another game that a lot of folks love to play. They love to play **the historian**. But the Bible says that, "Love thinketh no evil." That is, it doesn't keep a record of wrongs. But some folks, when they get into this thing, they are the historian, and they want to correct every detail. "I know that's wrong. It was on a Tuesday. It was not on a Thursday." Or, "You said this" or, "You said that." They go back into the past sometimes and bring up re-runs of old arguments; they have never disconnected the past.

Many times that's a diversionary smoke screen as the historian keeps very careful records; they have their little book of rights and wrongs that are done. But the Bible says that, "Love thinketh no evil." It does not keep a count of evil.

Now here's another game that people play when they speak and ought not to play. Not the historian, not the psychologist, not the professor, not the judge, but there're some people that want to be **the dictator**, and I pity you if you are married to one of these. And the dictator can be the man or the woman.

This is the individual who wants to rule by a show of force. And when you get into an argument with these individuals, they will say something like this, "I demand that you do this" or, "I will not allow that in my house." Sometimes men who think because they're the head of the house that they're Little Lord Ha-Ha or something like that. And they play the dictator.

Never make ultimatums to your spouse. That's ungodly. Never make veiled threats; that's even worse. "What do you mean, pastor, by a veiled threat?" You might say to your mate, "You try that one more time and see what happens." That's so unproductive. The honeymoon is generally that period of time between "I do" and "You'd better." That's what the dictator plays, and how do you coerce another individual as a dictator? How can you do this in marriage? Well, of course there's physical coercion, where a man will abuse a woman physically or vice versa. Sometimes women have been known to beat up men. Never, never, no, never, ever, ever resort to physical abuse.

But not only is there physical coercion, sometimes a person can become a neurotic invalid when they're not truly sick, as a way of getting even with the other individual and really to rule the roost. Sometimes men withhold money in order to be the dictator in the family. Sometimes a woman will withhold affection or the man will withhold affection. Sometimes the martyr will just simply sulk.

Do you know what happens when you play the dictator? That is so cruel. Do you know what you're saying to another individual when you demand they do this, or you demand they do that? You're saying to that individual, "I can do a better job with your life than you can." And it's absolutely cruel.

Now, another game that's an unproductive game. If you don't play the dictator, you may want to play **the critic**, and God knows there's some of those out here. You compare your mate with other people.



You ask this question, “Why can’t you be like she is?” Or, “Why can’t you be like Susan’s husband? Why can’t you?” Or on the other hand: “You’re just like your mother,” or “You’re just like your father,” and you compare. But the Bible says that, “Love does not behave itself unseemly.” That’s one of the most unseemly things you can do. And why is it so unseemly? Especially when you compare your mate with somebody else about traits that they have that your mate can never have. Your mate may have no control over these things. Physical traits, parents, upbringing. How cruel it is to compare your mate to somebody else and especially over something over which they have no control.

Here’s the last one that you need not to play. Don’t play **the preacher**. Don’t try to get Adrian’s sermons and re-preach them to your mate. “Love rejoiceth not in iniquity, it rejoices in the truth.” It does not use the Bible as a club. Don’t appear holier than thou. Don’t say to your mate, “Well, if you were godly, you would forgive me.” Let God tell her, tell him to forgive. I quoted several times what Ruth Graham is reported to have said. She said concerning husbands and wives, and she said this word to the wife, “It is your job to love your husband, it is God’s job to make him good.” Don’t play these games. They’re so nonproductive. Now the Bible says that you’re to, “Guard your tongue.” Listen, listen carefully. Speak and speak wisely.

But now come to the final of these three things, and look very carefully. What He says is this: He says tune in. What He says is this: He says tone down.

And then what He says is this: **lighten up**, lighten up! Go back to our text again. He says, “We are to be slow to wrath.” That is, don’t have a hair trigger, don’t get upset so easily, don’t get disturbed so quickly, “Be slow to wrath.” One translation, the Amplified Version, gives it this way, “Be slow to take offense and to get angry.”

Now notice he doesn’t say that you should never get angry. Now that’s impossible. As a matter of fact, it would be sinful for you not to get angry. You wouldn’t be like Jesus if you never got angry. Jesus got angry. The Bible says in Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 26, we’re to, “Be angry and sin not.” Now you can be angry and not sin, because Jesus was angry, and He never sinned. Mark chapter 3 verse 5 speaks of Jesus and says, “And when He had looked around about on them with anger being grieved for the hardness of their heart.”

Some things ought to make you angry, righteous anger. If you see a little child being abused, that ought to anger you. If you see somebody peddling dope, that ought to anger you. If you see these pornographers, who are infiltrating and corrupting the minds of our youth, that ought to anger you.

How can you be angry and sin not? Well number one, you have to **be angry for the right reason**. Jesus was angry at sin, and the way to be angry and to sin not, is to be angry only at sin. And to be angry, not only for the right reason, but **at the right things**. Not at the sinner, but at the sin. And to **be angry in the right way**; that your anger is to move you to do something about a situation that is wrong. But what our Lord is talking about and warning about here is an uncontrolled temper.

Now if you’re a husband or wife and you have an uncontrolled temper, you’re given to temper tantrums, let me describe something about you. Number one, you’re very foolish. Are you listening? Now if that made you upset, you come to me after the service and apologize to me and I’ll forgive you. But you are very foolish. Ecclesiastes chapter 7 and verse 9, “Anger resteth in the bosom of fools.” Now, don’t go explaining it because of your red hair or your family or your genes and chromosomes. You are a very foolish person if you’re angry.



I'm gonna tell you something else. You have a very weak character if you get needlessly, uncontrollably angry. Proverbs 16 verse 32, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." If you cannot rule your spirit, then, friend, you have a weak character. And I'm telling you this, if you don't learn to control your anger, you're gonna find that your anger's gonna bring you into all other kinds of sins in your marriage and in your professional life. Proverbs 29 verse 22, "An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression." That's the reason the Bible says, "Be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath." When you get angry, it's like throwing a rock into a wasp's nest. You're going to stir up things that you wish that you never stirred up.

Now suppose your mate is an angry mate. Suppose your mate gets angry with you. What should you do? Let me tell you some things not to do.

Don't practice avoidance. What I mean by that is, don't try to get away or act like my mate is really not angry at all. Or you just simply take that anger of your mate and you just stuff it and you have the idea, "Well if I retreat, if I back away, maybe it will go away." Now you're not helping your mate when you do that. You can only stuff it so long. You say, "Well, I'll put it down in the basement." Well, I'll tell you what it'll do. It'll come out of the basement window and come around back into the front door. Don't, don't stuff it because of a fear of confrontation, and your mate gets angry. Don't avoid the conflict by just simply backing off. Your stomach will keep the score. Don't practice avoidance.

Don't practice appeasement. Now listen carefully. Don't practice avoidance, and don't practice appeasement. It's a very unhealthy marriage when one mate always gives in, in order to have peace and to appease the other. When one mate always gets his or her way or gets his or her way most of the time, seems to dominate, your marriage is in serious trouble. Appeasement. One man said, "I like to go to the seashore, my wife likes to go to the mountains, so we compromise and go to the mountains." Well now if that's the kind of a marriage that you have, ultimately it's going to end up on the rocks. And if he gets violent and you get silent, your marriage is headed for trouble. Because one of these days those smoldering rags that are down in your heart are going to burst into an open flame, and your home is going to be engulfed in those flames. Or else, if it doesn't open and erupt into a raging fire, if you keep it stuffed down there, your mate's anger, you just keep it stuffed down there in your heart and in your life, you're going to develop a martyr complex. You're going to be a self-pitying person, and you're going to be living, even though you may not separate, with an emotional divorce.

Don't practice avoidance, don't practice appeasement, and **don't practice aggression.** Don't give anger for anger. Speak the truth. Speak it in love, never sarcastically. If your mate is angry with you, or you're angry with your mate, not avoidance, not appeasement, and not aggression. I'm gonna tell you how, when you, we find these times, and we all find ourselves in them, what to do. The Bible says, "You're to be slow to wrath."

Now let me give you some very practical things before I get into these other things. Make sure that if you're going to have an argument, make sure if you can, that you **have it at the right time.** Do you know when most arguments take place? Just before we eat. Now psychologists have told us this, marriage counselors. Why is that? Your blood sugar is down and you are a little more nervous. For goodness sakes, if you're gonna have an argument, don't have it just before meals. 90% of the arguments take place then.

Secondly, on the way to some social event. Have you and your wife ever gotten in an argument going



to a party? Isn't that the weirdest thing? Going to some social event, for some reason, I don't know why, we tend to want to get in arguments. But if we do that, then we can't talk it out, and we're trying to act nice around other people, so make certain it's the right time.

Number two: **the right tone**. When you talk, keep your words soft and sweet, you may have to eat them.

Number three, **the right turf**. The right time, the right tone, the right turf. Don't ever discuss problems with your mate when other people are around. Have you ever noticed that sometimes a wife will criticize her husband in front of the husband's best friends, or the husband will criticize the wife in front of her close friends? Do you know why they do that? They're cowards. They figure he can't answer back when thus and such a person is there, and it's really a cheap shot.

Now what do you do? What do you do? When you've got the right time, you're speaking in the right tone, you're on the right turf, what do you do? Well let me give you just three things and I'll be finished.

Number one: **practice accommodation**. Accommodate yourself to the other person. I'm not talking about, compromise, but accommodation. If you and your mate are so different, why don't you accommodate yourself to him or to her? Learn something about his sport. Learn something about her hobby.

Practice, number two: **acceptance**. Now folks, I am different from Joyce, I have accepted Joyce. Joyce is different from me, she has accepted me. I have given up trying to change Joyce. I am not going to change her. I can't change her. I wouldn't if I could, most of the time. You do not change a person so you can love them. If you do want to change them, the best way to do is to love them so you can change them. You can't change the other individual. Joyce is different from me temperamentally. She's different from me psychologically. She's different from me physically. And I am different from her.

And so we just simply have to accept the other individual. Never marry a person to make them over. Quit trying to change your mate. Getting married is like buying an old phonograph record. You buy it because you want what's on one side, you just take what comes on the other side, and that's the way it is in marriage.

Our families, the Rogers family is so different then the Gentry family. Around my family there were always wisecracks going back and forth. Zingers, zoom, zing, zing, like that, all around the dinner table, all the time. If you knew my momma you'd understand what I'm talking about. Don't ever get in a battle of wits with Momma. She's sharp, and I'd listen to all of that when I was a child. Around Joyce's house, there was none of that. And it's just different. Around Joyce's house, holidays and birthdays were very special. Around my house, they weren't. I don't know why. It's just the difference in the families.

Practice, friend, accommodation, practice acceptance, and **practice adjustment**. Change! Be willing to change. If she wants to go to bed earlier, go to bed earlier. If you want to stay up later, let her sometimes, stay up later with you. Rather than having a war where both lose, have a compromise where both can gain.

Now, listen. Listen to me folks. Listen to a man who is happily married. Not because I am so wonderful. Very frankly, if you knew some of the dark recesses of my heart, you wouldn't even let me be the pastor of this church. I am a bad hombre. The only good thing about me is the grace of God. And were it not



for the grace of God, our marriage would not have lasted, I'm telling you. But I'm going to tell you on the other hand, we have a wonderfully happy home. And the reason for it, listen very carefully, the reason for it is Jesus.

I told you at the introduction to this message that everybody needs three homes. He needs a family home; he needs a church home; he needs a heavenly home. And Jesus Christ is the key to all three. So, have you given your heart to Christ? Are you saved? Do you know that you know that He lives in your heart, because only by His love, First Corinthians chapter 13 type love, can you really truly be the husband or the wife that you need to be.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed, eyes are closed. If you're already saved, I want you to begin to pray for those who may not be saved. It might be your husband, it might be your wife, it might be your child, your father, your mother, your brother, your sister, your neighbor. It might be a stranger that you don't know, but you say, "Lord if they're not saved, just help them to trust You right now."

And if you're not saved, would you pray right now, "Lord, I need You. I want to know You personally. Help me right now that I might give my heart to You." And if you do want to give your heart to the Lord, let me lead you in a prayer, and I can promise you on the authority of the Word of God, if you'll pray this prayer and mean it, Jesus will save you. "Dear God, I'm a sinner, and I'm lost, and my sin deserves judgment, but, I want mercy. I want to be saved, I want to be forgiven. I want You to live in my life. I want You to live in my home. I want You to take me to Heaven. I need You God. Lord Jesus, You died to save me and You promised to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You, Lord Jesus. Right now in this seat, this morning. Right now, right now I trust You. I believe that You died for my sin, I believe that God raised You from the dead, and now I trust You only to save me. I don't look to my goodness, I don't depend upon my feelings, I trust You. Come into my heart, forgive my sin, save me Lord Jesus." Pray that prayer. Pray that prayer. "Save me, Lord Jesus." Pray it, pray it from your heart, "Save me, Lord Jesus." Did you ask Him? Then take the next step and pray this way, "I trust You to save me. Thank You for doing it. I don't ask for feeling and I don't look for a sign. I stand on Your Word. I am trusting You. You're now my Lord, and my Savior, my God, and my friend. Now, Lord Jesus, because You died for me, I will live for You and follow You the rest of my life. By Your grace, and for Your glory. Amen."



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