

Marriage Enrichment



Disagreements

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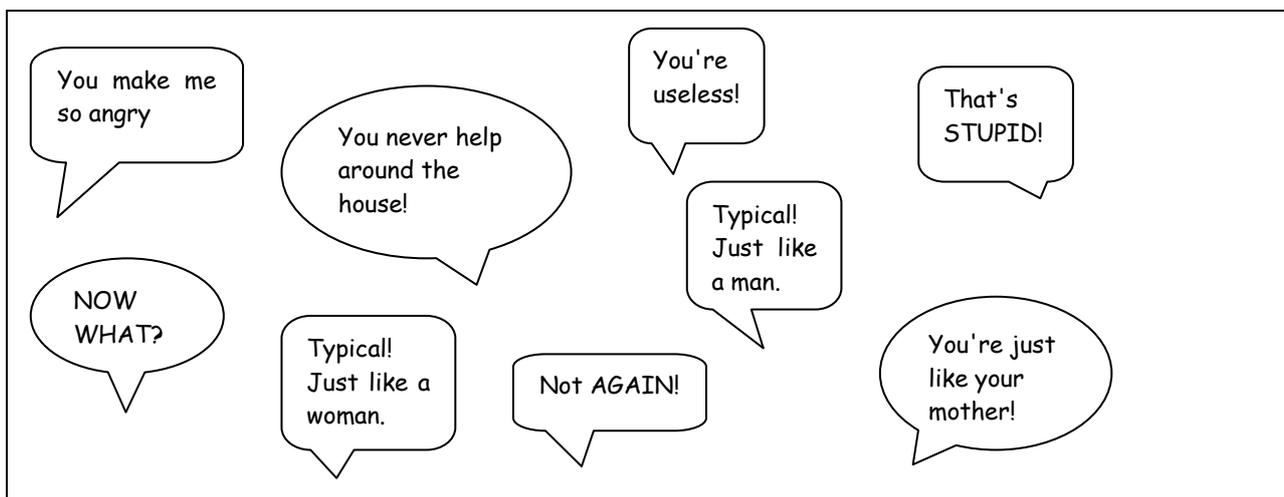
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DISAGREEMENTS

Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. Rom.14.19 (NIV)

Consider the following. Have you ever said anything like this to your partner, or had them used against you?



It's very easy to cause hurt and pain when we are irritated with each other. It can be harmful to a relationship to use these sorts of responses.

If you keep on biting and devouring one another, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

Gal 5.15 (NIV)

When we marry, we are two adults from different backgrounds. No matter how much in love we are or how much we think we will never fall out, it is inevitable that eventually we will have disagreements.

As two different people we are unlikely to think identically about important subjects such as money, sex, children, and also less important subjects such as who should take out the rubbish! All these things need to be discussed in a loving way.



Understanding how arguments develop and having a strategy to deal with them when they arise is vital.

😊 In what ways do you think the following verse applies in the context of a marriage relationship?

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

Eph.4.29 (NIV)

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Flash points

If possible, when a conflict situation looks likely, try to think how your partner feels. Try to put yourself in their shoes. Maybe they have had a bad day. There may be circumstances that you don't know about yet that have made them the way they are. Think before you respond. Sometimes, things are not what they seem.



A gentle answer turns away wrath. Proverbs 15.1 (NIV)

😊 How do you feel, individually, about the following responses to conflict? Which would you find easiest/most difficult to do? Share your thoughts with each other. Add anything else that you feel is relevant.

- Staying silent
- Listening
- Saying: "Let's not argue about this. Let's talk about it calmly."
- Tell me what's upsetting you
- Let's pray about this before we say anymore

😊 Consider the following and share your thoughts with each other:

For some women, pre-menstrual tension (PMT) may sometimes cause unpredictable mood changes and lead to tension. If this is a problem try to understand and accept that this is usually a short-term difficulty for *both* of you. Working out strategies *together* to deal with these times, will help. Medical help can be beneficial if PMT becomes a major difficulty for you.

However, not all women suffer in this way and not all tension is PMT. A bad mood may simply be a bad mood. More seriously though, it may be that there are significant, underlying issues that are causing stress. To label this as PMT can make light of it suggesting that it will soon be gone. This can be hurtful and dismissive.

In a Christ-centred relationship there is no place for disregarding each other's feelings and difficulties - wives or husbands.

😊 In what ways can you help each other to maintain mutual respect and value in your relationship? Try to think of some practical examples.

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Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry. Eph.4 26 (NIV)

Working through disagreements effectively helps a relationship to grow and strengthen.



Consider the following questions together.

- What is the biggest cause of disagreement between you?
- What happens when you disagree? How do you react to each other?
- What are you each trying to achieve when you argue?
- How do you feel about having an argument?
- How would you like your partner to respond when there is a disagreement between you?
- How do you resolve your disagreements?

It's not always the best thing to win an argument; you might end up feeling as though you had lost! The damage done to your relationship may outweigh any satisfaction you have gained.



Share with each other how you feel about the following. How do you think these teachings apply in the marriage relationship?

The Scriptures emphasise an attitude of humility for human relationships. Jesus took on the servant role in washing his disciples' feet (John 13), and Paul writes: 'submit to one another out of reverence for Christ'. (Ephesians 5.21 NIV).

Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else. 1 Thess. 5.15 (NIV)

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Responding to each other

The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.

Prov.15.4 (NIV)

In our responses to one another, each of us has within us elements of three types of behaviour: parent, child and adult. In an argument, any of these may come to the fore.

In general terms:

- the Parent in us can be nurturing, edifying, or critical;
- the Child in us can be spontaneous, accepting, or rebellious / sulky;
- the Adult in us is objective, reasonable and rational.



In a disagreement, it is the negative expressions that people use, and how they use them, that can cause a conflict to escalate. Critical parent and sulky child reactions often reflect negative, hidden emotions beneath the surface, for example, feelings of inferiority, resentment, or guilt. These can be very powerful. The kinds of words that people use provide the clue.

CRITICAL PARENT

You always . . .you never . . .
now look . . . how many times
must I . . . if I were you . . .
you should . . . you ought . . .
you must . . . ridiculous . . .
don't be stupid . . . you are so .
. .

SULKY CHILD

I don't care . . . No. I won't . . .
That's not fair . . . Why should
I? . . . I want . . . I'm fed up
with this . . . get off my back . .
. so what? . . . I shall if I want
to!



How do you respond to the above phrases? If they were used against you what would your thoughts and feelings be?

Love. . . is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

1 Cor 3.5(NIV)

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Choices

We *always* have a choice in how we respond to one another.

The way to handle confrontation is to let the ADULT in us appeal to the ADULT in our partner in a rational, non-threatening way. Our relationship will grow more Christ-like if we allow Biblical principles to influence our conversations.

Listen carefully to my words; let this be the consolation you give me. Job 21.1 (NIV)

Being prepared to *listen* to what our partner has to say and to try and see their point of view are the first steps to resolving disputes.



What are your reactions to the following phrases? Share your thoughts with each other.

ADULT

I see what you mean . . . I take your point .
. . let's talk about this . . . That's fair
comment . . . This is a real problem for
me . . . let's try and find a way through
this . . . What do you think is the right
thing to do? . . . Let's pray about this. . . . I
understand, although have you thought
about? . . . How would the Lord deal with
this? . . .

Listening to one another and speaking without blaming are very important in resolving disputes. So too, are 'talking and touching'. Don't be too proud when tempers have flared, to cuddle up and talk things through.

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Eph 4.32 (NIV)

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Saying What You Mean

Speaking honestly, without blame or accusation can take the heat out of a situation, but this is not an easy thing to do. It takes practice. As a first step it means taking out the accusing 'you' phrases and using 'I' phrases instead. Here are a few examples:

'YOU' PHRASES

- Why can't you get yourself ready on time?
- You're always ignoring me. You walk off and talk to everyone except me.
- What's the matter with you? You're driving like a maniac!

'I' PHRASES

- I'm worried that we shall be late.
- I feel silly when I'm left on my own because I don't know anyone.
- I'm scared when you drive like this.



Try turning the following 'you' phrases into 'I' phrases.

- Why do you spend so much money on trivial things?
- You're late!

Finally, whose responsibility is it to say 'sorry'?



What are your individual reactions to the following? Which statement do you feel more comfortable with? Explain your reasons to each other.

- In a Christian marriage, it is the man's responsibility to take the initiative in resolving disagreements, even if he believes he is in the right. He is the head of the woman as Jesus is the head of the Church. In the same way that the Lord Jesus sacrificed himself for his bride, so must the husband for the wife.
- Both husband and wife are under a covenant relationship with the Lord Jesus, and it is the responsibility of each of them to resolve disagreements.

NOTES