

## Fighting for Your Marriage Session 2

### What Causes Conflict? Sin and Desires

Although conflict existed prior to the fall, this conflict was not negative. There was a oneness and an openness toward one another that we have a hard time understanding today. Genesis 2:24-25 says, *"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame."* While this passage has several applications, it most clearly teaches that Adam and Eve started out with no barriers to intimacy. There was no fear, no negative patterns. They must have had an incredible intimacy. Scripture does not say how long this lasted, but we know that it ended when they sinned. The first thing that Adam and Eve did following their sin was to cover up with fig leaf garments.

Genesis 3:7-8 *Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.*

They hid from each other and they hid from God. What had been great intimacy (including with God) was shattered. Because Adam and Eve now had sin in their heart, their conflict becomes negative. Adam in conflict with God shamefully blames God and his wife. Eve blames the serpent.

Sin in our heart means that our conflict becomes negative. Negative conflicts will happen because *we want our own way and make choices to get it*. The Bible talks about our selfish desires as the *reason* for many of our conflicts.

*What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from **your desires** that battle within you? **You want something** but you don't get it.* (James 4:1-2; emphasis added).

Our selfish desires are at the *root* of many of our fights with other people. Sinful, self-serving desires often take control of our hearts. Our heart is like a battle field where our selfish desires are at war with what we know is right. Our desires can fool us. We will often think that our selfish desires are right, but if they lead us to disobey God's Word, then they are wrong! When we give in to them, we often end

up in a conflict with someone. Here are some examples of times when you could find yourself in a conflict, if you let your selfish desires rule over you:

- You want to stay up longer, but your parents say you need to go to bed.
- You want to watch the game on TV, but your spouse wants to go out for the evening.
- You want to avoid a person who has hurt you, but the Bible says you should seek reconciliation.
- You want to go outside to play, but your teacher says you need to stay in to do your work.

It is important to note that all desires are not necessarily wrong or the root of conflict. It's when a *desire* becomes a *demand* that trouble begins. The more you make choices in order to get your own way, the more likely you are to have conflict with others. Let's talk about some specific root causes that can lead to sinful choices, causing conflict in your life.

**Root: Pride:**

Outcome: You think you are *better than others*.

You *don't like to be wrong*.

Choice: You become defensive and argumentative when someone corrects you.

**Root: Greed:**

Outcome: You want *more*, and you are *not content* with what you have.

Choice: You complain that you don't have what other people have.

You take things or use things that don't belong to you.

**Root: Fear of others:**

Outcome: You are *afraid* of what others will think of you.

You want too much to be *liked and accepted*.

You are eager to have other people *approve* of you and *applaud* your efforts.

Choice: You won't tell your friends that you are a Christian because you are afraid that they will think you are strange and reject you.

You go along with your friends, even when you know that what they are doing is wrong, so that they will accept you.

You need constant reassurance that you are doing well.

**Root: Fear of failure:**

Outcome: You are *afraid* that you will fail and look foolish, so you resist taking risks to try new things.

Choice: You will not take promotions, because you don't believe you will succeed.

You will stay home from school on the day you are to give an oral report because you are afraid that people will laugh at what you say.

**Root: Selfishness:**

Outcome: You want *your own way*.

Choice: You will argue, nag, whine, lie, and even throw a temper tantrum to try to get people to give in to your desires.

**Root: Self-pity:**

Outcome: You feel sorry for yourself and you want others to *feel sorry* for you, too.

Choice: You pout and say, "Nobody has as many chores to do as me!" or "You never let me do anything!" or "Nobody likes me!"

You believe that your lot in life is harder than others have to bear.

**Root: Envy:**

Outcome: You want what *others* have.

You are not *content* with what you have.

Choice: If your sister gets a new shirt, then you want one as well.

You make fun of your brother because he gets good grades and yours aren't as good.

You spend huge amounts of time earning money to get what others have.

You run up a huge debt to "have things."

**Root: Jealousy:**

Outcome: You are afraid of *losing the love or friendship of someone special* if that

person pays attention to someone else.

Choice: You become angry at your friend for inviting another friend to go skating.

You try to do everything you can to break up their friendship.

You envy the relationships that other people seem to have, but you are unable to find.

Root: **Laziness:**

Outcome: You want to do *only what pleases you*.

You *resist responsibility*.

Choice: You refuse to do your chores or schoolwork.

You sit and watch TV instead of doing something constructive.

Root: **Boredom:**

Outcome: You want someone to *entertain* you.

Choice: You mope around the house, complaining that you don't have anything to do. You try to put the responsibility on other people for thinking of things that you could do with your time.

If you allow your selfish desires to control you, you will often make wrong choices, and your life may be filled with conflict.

The good news is that even though *sinful desires* are rooted in your heart, you don't have to act on those desires. You can ask the Lord to forgive you for loving your selfish desires more than you love Him, and then ask Him to help you to do what is right according to His Word. Then you will please the Lord, and that is always a good choice. Look at 1 John 1:9.

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

If your desire is to please God, He will forgive your sinful desires, and help you to make good choices. By doing so, you can avoid much unnecessary conflict. He can even give you a new desire to please him, one that brings him honor and glory. Pray that God will give you that desire.

### **Applicable Bible Stories**

Analyze the conflict situations in the following passages.

What is the *root* of each conflict?

Cain's response to Abel (Genesis 4:1-8)

Abram and Lot (Genesis 13:1-12)

Saul keeping the sheep (1 Samuel 15:1-26)

The fiery furnace (Daniel 3:1-30)

Ahab and Nabal's vineyard (1 Kings 21:1-16)

Gideon's fleece (Judges 6:11-27)

Elijah (1 Kings 19:1-18)

The man in Proverbs 6:6-11

Judas (John 12:1-6; Matthew 26:14-16)

Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8:9-24)

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