



## Family Conflict Guidelines

### **Don't bring up past conflicts, focus on the issue at hand**

Pro. 17:9" ...he who repeats a matter separates intimate friends. "

As we have mentioned before, settled disputes have to be laid to rest, there must be closure.

Bringing up past conflicts is strictly off-limits. In the Gospel accounts, when did Jesus ever remind someone of their forgiven past?

### **No put-downs, name calling**

Words that the world uses such as "idiot," "slob" or even "jerk," "dumb," or "shut up" have no place in the Christian's vocabulary and they have no place in the Christian home. According to our Lord (in Matt. 5:22), to call someone such terms is to make us "liable to the hell of fire."

### **No sarcasm, ridicule, or insults**

Making jokes about people or their behavior is sinful towards God and detrimental towards others. It creates an environment of hostility and cynicism. Sarcasm, ridicule, and insulting words are expressions of anger through the vehicle of humor.

### **No exaggerating**

An easy way of losing credibility is by overstating our case or by shortchanging the other persons' good side in a conflict. State your case fairly and honestly and give the other person credit where they deserve it. Another important aspect of exaggeration to avoid is in the use of "always" and "never." Rather than saying that something "always" happens, it is better to say it happens "frequently" or "regularly" or "often."

### **No venting of anger**

(Eph. 4:31-32) "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you." Sometimes people seem to act as though "he who has the loudest voice wins." Sometimes it is a power play, a sign of frustration, immaturity or a lack of self-control. In actuality, anything that is said in anger can be conveyed just as well in a normal speaking voice. 1 Cor. 13 says that "love is patient"--and this is precisely the virtue that is needed to work things out according to God's procedures and according to His timing. When we show anger we show pride--we say, in effect, "I deserve better than this and I demand my rights!" [The only person who really did deserve better treatment was Christ, and He was patient towards those who mistreated Him.]

### **No punishment or revenge**

Prov. 17:13 He who returns evil for good, Evil will not depart from his house.

Prov. 24:29 Do not say, "Thus I shall do to him as he has done to me"

This is very destructive. Parents have the authority to punish their children but adults don't have the right to punish other adults (we're not talking about the criminal justice system here). [Every once in a while I hear of a couple where a husband grounds a wife as if she was a child, or a wife destroys her husband's belongings.]

Revenge is also forbidden in a relationship just as it is towards anyone who hurts us. Being a vengeful person is the exact opposite of being a peacemaker.

### **No "silent-treatment" or avoidance**

Eph. 4:26 says do not let the sun go down on your anger. It's sub-Christian to be so upset with someone that you attempt to punish them by giving them the "silent-treatment." Refusing to talk is just as much a symptom of anger as shouting is. [There are cases, though, where it might be best for a time it is best to keep silent or give someone space--but only if not done out of anger or spite.] Don't expect people to read your mind

Beware of thinking "this person should know that I like this or that" or "this person should know that I hate it when they do such and such a thing." These may be expectations from your family background, etc. It's important to realize ahead of time, that others don't share all your experiences and may have different opinions that have formed over the years.

### **Avoid judging motives**

Pro. 21:2 Every man's way is right in his own eyes, But the LORD weighs the hearts.

Since we can never see into the heart, we must be very careful about interpreting someone's behavior and judging their motivations. We look at the behavior, the Lord looks at the heart. You don't have to say everything you think--avoid unnecessary or unproductive comments. (Eph. 4:29)

Eph. 4:29 Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such {a word} as is good for edification according to the need {of the moment,}

Just because two people may be very open with each other it doesn't mean that they are allowed to gush out with an unrestrained openness. Before saying something questionable, ask yourself: "Is the necessary?" "Will it further godliness?" "Will this contribute towards a solution?" "Is this pertinent to what we're discussing?" "Will my saying this be more likely to help or to hurt?"

### **CONCLUSION:**

Relationships are an important part of our overall discipleship as Christians. Christ who is the Lord of life is also to be the Lord of our conflicts. Using God's wisdom and God's principles in our disagreements we can maximize our unity, exercise our love, and grow in Christian character. Our lives and our relationships will be marked by the difference that Christ alone makes and will be a shining testimony in a selfish and uncaring world.