

Guard Against Conflict in Marriage

I wish to encourage you to guard against conflict in your marriage.

For many newlyweds, it doesn't take long for the honeymoon to wear off and a less favourable reality sets in. Traits and habits in each other that weren't obvious in the past become a problem. While it takes two soft hearts to experience the dream marriage as God designed it, it only takes one hard heart to create conflict.

Sin's Consequence in marriage:

Obviously, there will always be minor, inconsequential differences between spouses, but it's sin that causes conflict and damage. From the beginning, when God administered judgment on Adam and Eve's sin, we see the ugly reality of sin's curse upon marriage. Genesis 3:16b *"Your desire (desire to master) shall be for your husband, and he shall rule (to make to have rule) over you"* [Emphasis added]. Today, we still find these two sinful traits in marriage. Two spouses, both with an internal, and often unidentifiable desire to get one over the other. The unspoken desire is to master and rule the other through the small and large issues of life, often silent, yet powerfully undermining the other for dominance.

The Internal Seeds of Conflict:

God's Word gives us many warnings of the source of sin that damages relationships; these relate to marriage also and should not be ignored. Following are just five key passages which assist us to identify our internal causes of conflict,

for which we are responsible.

- **Internal passions that war within.** James tells it the way it is, *"What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?"* (James 4:1). Our self-centered desires will sooner or later lash out in arguments. If unchecked, these can become a bloodthirsty war fueled by the blinding desire to have what it wants at any cost.
- **Internal hostility toward godliness.** Submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ is the only hope of victory over *"the mind that is set on the flesh (which) is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot"* (Romans 8:7). Sinful human desire will always lead away from a God honouring marriage.
- **Internal Idolatry.** It's all too easy to become your own god through self-obsession. *"Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others"* (Philippians 2:3-4). Believer's put their spouse before self as an expression of the Lord's character within. Once self becomes primary, idolatry is established, and others must bow to it.
- **Internal condemnation of others.** Here's where the flesh rages against the Holy Spirit. Sin empowers the critical heart. Instead, *"Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven"* (Luke 6:37). Forgiveness and reconciliation is wonderful in marriage, but better still, is the absence of a condemning attitude which creates the need for reconciliation. Forgiveness is a powerful comrade of holiness and best expresses the gracious character of Jesus Christ.
- **Internal antonyms of love.** *"Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable*

*or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. **Love never ends...**" (1 Corinthians 13:4-8a).*

Today, tell your spouse of your unfailing love for them by guarding against conflict in your marriage. Our Heavenly Father will be glorified and your marriage will be blessed.

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