

## **Avoiding a Tsunami in Marriage: Realistic Tools for solving real marital conflicts**

Larry Johnson

Marriage Check in / Conflict / Genesis 3:15

# Intro: cori

(Also see *Marriage*)

A woman, married thirty years, was asked, “In your many years of marriage did you ever consider divorce?” She said, “No, I never considered divorce ... murder, maybe.”

—Ray Stedman, sermon “How to Repent,” January 13, 1980

**Ray Stedman**

**Larry**

### **Where does relational conflict come from?**

**Genesis 3:15–16 CSB**

<sup>15</sup> I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.

<sup>16</sup> He said to the woman: I will intensify your labor pains; you will bear children with painful effort. Your desire will be for your husband, yet he will rule over you.

**(EXP)(15)** As a consequence of the fall God introduces “conflict” into the created order. The hostility in this case, is between the seed of the woman and the serpent's offspring. This is a Messianic prophecy about the levels to which Satan would attack the seed of the woman to kill

“The one” who will come to crush his head.

## **(15) Define Hostility: Opposition**

**How early do we see this hostility playing out in the history of man?**

6988 Life without conflict is impossible.

Oswald Chambers

› **Look how early it showed up after the fall**

**Genesis 4:8 CSB**

<sup>8</sup> Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field.” And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

**(Exp)(8)** This is what happens when “opposition” is not handled in a biblical fashion. It is an extreme situation, but there are other ways we can cause some of the same dangers as Cain did.

- Long-Term Silence
- Passive Aggressive Bitterness
- Rejection
- Separation
- Divorce

**(8)** If you have a family, all of these will cause trauma and damage to your legacy. No matter how much you try to hide this from the kids, they notice before anyone that you, as Husband and Wife, are not clicking on all cylinders. They know there’s some underlying conflict still lying beneath the surface.

› **James's picks up this point as well. James 4:1-3**

**James 4:1-3 CSB**

<sup>1</sup> What is the source of wars and fights among you? Don't they come from your passions that wage war within you?

<sup>2</sup> You desire and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and wage war. You do not have because you do not ask.

<sup>3</sup> You ask and don't receive because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

**(1)** James tells us the source of conflict.

- Conflict comes from passions that wage war within us. You desire and don't have. Notice this phrase. Normally conflicts come in marriage when one or two people are wrestling for control of the marriage and both are unwilling to relent.

Verbal argument, private violence, or national conflict—the cause of them all can be traced back to the wrongful lust to want more than we have, to be envious of and covet what others have, whether it be their position or their possessions.

**Douglas J. Moo**

› Let's take a look at Eve's consequences. They are very interesting.

**Genesis 3:16 CSB**

<sup>16</sup> He said to the woman: I will intensify your labor pains; you will bear children with painful effort. Your desire will be for your husband, yet he will rule over you.

**(EXP)(16) God tells her I will intensify your labor pains,**

**and at this time, there were no spinal blocks or epidurals. The woman would have to experience the full brunt of the pain of childbirth, but that's not it.**

**(16)** Your desire will be for your husband, yet he will rule over you. This is a very interesting phrase. In English, it is not very clear. We need to do some work on this text. I need you to remember this is a consequence, not a benefit. Also, remember before this, they were already married. Also, you need to remember both Adam and Eve did not have physical flaws at all. They were perfect. So it is safe to assume she already had a desire for her Husband. So if she had a healthy desire for her Husband already, "How is this an actual consequence?" Let's take a look at the only other usage of this word in Genesis 4:7

**Genesis 4:7 CSB**

<sup>7</sup> If you do what is right, won't you be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it."

**(7)** God tells Cain to quit crying and go back and give another sacrifice. But then he issues a warning. If you keep letting your anger boil, Sin will crouch at the door. The Lord uses an "Animal" metaphor. Like a Lion, Cain, Sin is waiting to take dominion over him. When the writer of this text uses the word "desire," he is using it in connection with domination. So now let's go back to Genesis 3:16 and read it fresh:

**Genesis 3:16 CSB**

<sup>16</sup> He said to the woman: I will intensify your labor pains;

you will bear children with painful effort. Your desire will be for your husband, yet he will rule over you.

**(16)** Your desire to take dominion over your husband will be in your spirit. This will be an ongoing challenge for you. You will want to control and be independent when you want your way but dependent when you mess up. The woman will have an insatiable need to be in the driver's seat in the marriage.

**(16) “Yet he will rule over you.” As a part of her consequence, the man will rule over her.** Now, it is essential that you realize prior to this consequence, the man was already leading her. Adam was doing his job up until the Tree mishap. But he's leading in total harmony of the will and purposes of God. But now, after the sin. Man will now have a sinful nature, so his propensities and proclivities will now become distorted as well, and this will leave him wavering between two extremes.

- **Over-ruling-** this is the tyrant; this is the control freak. This is a verbal abuser and physical abuser. The Jealous man does not believe a woman should talk without permission. The insecure man who can't stand for his wife to have any enjoyment outside of what he provides.

- This man greatest desire is having **“The First Wife on Coming to America”**

- **Under-ruling-**This is the powderpuff man who tells his wife, **“Whatever you like honey!”** He is just in the house, but he is not hands-on. The wife leads, guides, and determines the direction of the whole family. He is simply

working and bringing home a check. This is not healthy either, because within the soul of man is found the plan and purposes of God for the family. An emasculated man can't lead the family.

***Why do men choose peace instead of conflict when they know their wife is controlling them?***

a. Men deeply desire peace and respect when they come home, not constant conflict. Any man worth his salt loves to please his wife, so that can set him up to please her even above God sometimes.

b. **SEX**-Wives can hurt husbands when they use sex as a tool of control.

- Essentially God gave Eve what she wanted. In the garden, Eve got in front of Adam and out of her lane, so God essentially said I am going to give you this desire to always get out of your lane and “**buck**” against your husband's authority, but you will now have to deal with a men who will not always lead according to my will, but you will be stuck with them.

- Saints, I don't want to beat up on Eve because Adam's consequences are more in-depth, and God holds him to a higher standard, but I must be honest with the text.

Hostility was interjected into the marriage in this consequence.

- God still wants us to get married and multiply, but he is saying Marriage isn't going to be easy. There will be some conflict two believers will have to navigate, and a constant wrestling over control of the marriage.

› Transition Statement: I am sure you are all really discouraged now. There is no hope! I guess we are just stuck in this horrible cycle of conflict without any options.

Cori

## I. We are on the same team

**We need to solidify this point. Saints, your spouse is not your enemy. We don't usually do this, but please look at one another and pronounce, "you are not my enemy; you are my ally."**

1. Enemy: a person who is actively opposed or hostile to someone or something.
2. Ally: a state formally cooperating with another for a military or other purpose.

If it weren't for marriage, men and women would have to fight with total strangers.

**Anonymous**

**You are not my enemy! You are my Ally!**

• Your marriage is a formal, spiritual, and legal covenant to partner together for a greater purpose. Let's examine this purpose.

**Genesis 1:28-29 CSB**

<sup>28</sup> God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth."

<sup>29</sup> God also said, “Look, I have given you every seed-bearing plant on the surface of the entire earth and every tree whose fruit contains seed. This will be food for you, **(EXP)(28)** “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it.” Notice that God blessed them. Plural pronoun. And God said to them(plural pronoun) this tells us this is a joint venture.

**Genesis 2:18–24 CSB**

<sup>18</sup> Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper corresponding to him.”

<sup>19</sup> The LORD God formed out of the ground every wild animal and every bird of the sky, and brought each to the man to see what he would call it. And whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name.

<sup>20</sup> The man gave names to all the livestock, to the birds of the sky, and to every wild animal; but for the man no helper was found corresponding to him.

<sup>21</sup> So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to come over the man, and he slept. God took one of his ribs and closed the flesh at that place.

<sup>22</sup> Then the LORD God made the rib he had taken from the man into a woman and brought her to the man.

<sup>23</sup> And the man said: This one, at last, is bone of my bone

and flesh of my flesh; this one will be called “woman,” for she was taken from man.

<sup>24</sup> This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh.

**(18) “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper corresponding to him.” This is the only thing in creation up until this point that God said was not good. Do you think this is an “oops moment” for God? Did God just forget to assign Adam a helper who would correspond with him?**

- This move by God seems intentional. Let me speculate: if he had created Eve from the start, Adam would probably not have longed for her or appreciated her because she was always there. But in waiting and creating some wonder and question in Adam, there would be an appreciation by Adam for his new gift.

**(20) “But for the man no helper was found corresponding to him.” The man was obedient, naming the animals and doing what God called him to do.** He was probably also seeing the animals mating and having babies. In this process, he may have begun to long for someone else as well. This tells us that longing for a relationship is not a sin. It is natural to long for human interaction. I am sure Adam was enjoying his time with the Lions, Tigers, and Bears, but at some point, he realized everyone was “booed up” except him. Then God said its time to introduce to him his **“New Boo”**

- at this point he can complete the whole mission of God.  
**Be Fruitful-Be productive(spiritually, socially, emotionally, and educationally)**

**Multiply-Have children and teach them what has been taught to him**

**Fill the Earth-migrate. explore the creation**

**Subdue it—Don't be enslaved to the creation, but take dominion. This is a warning against idolatry. This world I created is full of desirable things: foods, beaches, Animals, Resources, and people of all colors, sizes, and shapes. Don't be subject to or enslaved to any. But you are to pledge your allegiance only to me, not what I have created. Created things are to be used, not worshipped.**

#### › Application

1. Married Folks are on a joint mission
2. Married Folks are Ally's Covenant partners fulfilling a mission
3. The mission God gave to the first couple could not have been done without each other's full cooperation.

#### › Conclusion

- Long-term unresolved conflict pits two partners, allies, against each other.
- Two allies pitted against each other will cease to make progress on the cooperate mission.
- God's desire is that two people fully commit to making the mission their life goal, not being right or winning an argument.

# II. We have powerful, practical tools for resolving conflicts

› Principles for Godly Decision-making

## LARRY

**Proverbs 3:5–8 CSB**

<sup>5</sup> Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding;

<sup>6</sup> in all your ways know him, and he will make your paths straight.

<sup>7</sup> Don't be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and turn away from evil.

<sup>8</sup> This will be healing for your body and strengthening for your bones.

***What truths can be gleaned from the powerful promise?***

- “God will make your path straight.”
- “Physical and Emotional vitality”(Less stress in life)
- Long-term unresolved conflict causes stress. The church says, Amen!

**What are the requirements for getting supernatural direction from Yahweh?**

1. Trust in the Lord with all your heart.
  - a. Trust-to confidently rely on

2. Do not rely on or Lean on your understanding. Don't put the weight of your situation on human wisdom.

Remember that a large part of our conflicts is spiritual, so we need spiritual help with them.

3. In all your ways, know him

a. studying the word

b. Prayer

c. communion with the saints

d. Living the word will build confidence in the Lord.

e. enduring trials and tribulation

**Application:**

God does not want you stuck. He has a desire to guide you through conflicts.

› **Transition Statement:** Lord, I am so mad at my spouse that I don't even want to pray with them. Anytime we sit down to talk, we argue and fuss!! Lord help us!!!

**James 1:19–20 CSB**

<sup>19</sup> My dear brothers and sisters, understand this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger,

<sup>20</sup> for human anger does not accomplish God's righteousness.

**(EXP)(19)** James says, "My family!" James is talking to his whole church family: Married Folk, Single Folk, Biological Brothers, Sisters, Friends, and Enemies. Notice this principle he gives.

**(19) "Everyone" Saints, we must define this word! Tell me what this word means?**

- Husband, just because you are the leader does not mean you are exempt from this. Wives, I know you are a leader, but you are not exempt. Parents, I know your kids are small, and many of us were raised in homes where kids were taught to just obey. Parents didn't need to listen to their children. Parents told children what to do, and that's it. Well, James would disagree with you. This is a principle for all areas of Christian Relationships.

**(19)** “Be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger.”

- Let's take a look at this text; it gives us a three-step process to handling conflict:

## CORI

**Step #1: Be quick to listen. We should rush to hear. We should not rush to talk but rush to talk.**

James (Explanation of Text)

We are told to “hurry up and listen,” with the word for hurry or quickness (ταχύς) implying the idea of rapid pursuit.

- it's important that we discuss the word listening.

**Is it possible to hear/listen without understanding?**

**Husband watching the game**

**What does it mean to listen to understand?**

## What “Listening to Understand” Looks Like

Instead of thinking about what you want to say while the other person is talking, listen to them. The experts call this

“active listening”, and there are a few different components:

## **Five Components of Active Listening**

1. **Pay attention**-When someone is talking to you, look at them. Notice their eye contact and body language. Take in their tone of voice and what they are actually saying.

*Listen.*

2. **Listen with your body**-Turn toward the person talking, lean in, and make them feel listened to because you really are listening. Make eye contact, smile, nod, and make leading noises (“Uh-huh”, “Really?”, “Go on”, etc.) when appropriate.

3. **Don’t interrupt.** The best way to make someone feel like they are not being heard is to interrupt or talk on top of them. Listen fully and wait until they are done to ask questions or add your thoughts.

4. **Repeat what they said.** Don’t just say what you were planning to say. Show that you have heard what they said by repeating a summary of what you heard when appropriate before adding your own opinions.

5. **Respond to what they said.** Be honest and respectful in your responses, and remember to talk and listen in the ways that you would want to be talked to or listened to.

### **Conclusion:**

- While listening, try to empathize with what the other person is going through. To empathize is to put yourself in their shoes. Actively try to see things from their

perspective. This may not make you change your position but will allow you to be more sensitive and understanding of their point of view.

- The point of active listening is not to win or destroy your supposed opponent but to understand their perspective and their heart so that you can grow. When this happens, you both win.

**Say it with me: You are not my enemy! You are my Ally!**

**Step 2: Slow to speak—This takes discipline especially when you want to make your point and think your spouse is “out of their mind” they may be thinking “out of their mind” but give time for the spirit of God to calm your tongue so that you don’t bite them.**

**James Explanation of Text**

Credible Christian relationships require careful attention to others’ perspectives

Beware of letting your tongue outrun your brain....Spurgeon

The Christian should learn two things about his tongue how to hold it and how to use it

**(19)** Slow to speak. You will notice that this text does not call for total silence; it calls for measured, thought-out responses.

**Step #3: Slow to Anger—This does not refer to the type of anger that comes from being cut off in traffic or when you stub your toe at night on the bed. The Greek word “orge”**

**describes a slow, bubbling anger that you allow to fester and grow. James tells us not to allow ourselves to get heated to the point where we lose perspective and reason.**

**James 1:20 CSB**

<sup>20</sup> for human anger does not accomplish God's righteousness.

**(20)** James tells us human anger leads us away from God's righteousness, not towards God. You will see that he says "human anger," which is different from "righteous indignation." Anger is an emotion that God gave us, but it is dangerous, like playing with fire. One should not blow air into it. Righteous Indignation is an anger that is aligned with God's nature. This is when you start to hate the things that God hates.

- When it gets to this point that is when the insults start flying, and James gives us some teaching about that as well as listening to James 3:5-8

**James 3:5-8 CSB**

<sup>5</sup> So too, though the tongue is a small part of the body, it boasts great things. Consider how a small fire sets ablaze a large forest.

<sup>6</sup> And the tongue is a fire. The tongue, a world of unrighteousness, is placed among our members. It stains the whole body, sets the course of life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

<sup>7</sup> Every kind of animal, bird, reptile, and fish is tamed and

has been tamed by humankind,

<sup>8</sup> but no one can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

### **What is James's conclusion about the tongue in (8)?**

- When you let your anger “seethe,” that is when the insults start flying. All the things you have wanted to say previously that the spirit restrained you from saying because they would do damage to your spouse, you let them go. We have all been there when something came out that we couldn’t put back in.

### **let’s repeat it: “You are not my enemy!” “You are my Ally!”**

- Saints, I have given you some tools. Now, how does it look in real-time:

1. Determine the level of seriousness of the conflict or decision: Is this conflict or Decision (Doctrinal or a Cause us to Sin)? Remember that God will never call you to do something that violates his nature or scripture. If you feel peaceful about doing this, it is not from God but Satan.
2. Can there be a compromise, or does one position have to take over another?
3. (What does the other person need for restoration) Is there a need for some apologies and repentance for past pains and indiscretions? if so, give them because they may be hurting the relationship.
4. Husbands and Wives, in cases of decision that can’t be

compromised, talk them out, pray over them, and give time for God to answer those prayers. Let me give you another powerful tool for your belt James 1:5-8

James 1:5–8 (CSB)

<sup>5</sup> Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God—who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly—and it will be given to him. <sup>6</sup> But let him ask in faith without doubting. For the doubter is like the surging sea, driven and tossed by the wind. <sup>7</sup> That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord, <sup>8</sup> being double-minded and unstable in all his ways.

### **What is needed in this text?**

- Wisdom

### **Who provides answers to the request?**

- God

### **What is God's level of willingness to answer this prayer?**

- He is ready to give “Wisdom” generously and ungrudgingly.

### **What is the condition for this promise?**

- But let ask in faith

### **How does James describe a person who doubts God?**

- He is like a ship in the water tossed around by the waves
- Husbands and Wives God will give this wisdom. Wives there will be times when your husband has to make the call in those cases pray for him and support him. He will get it wrong sometimes, but there is growth in submission. Husband learn from your mistakes and try not to repeat them. A hard headed man can wear down a submissive

woman.

- In all things trust the Lord who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all we could ask or think

## Pray