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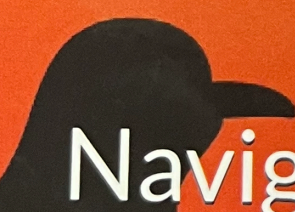
The Resilient Marriage

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Navigating Conflict with
Your Spouse

Brian DeCook

This discussion guide is intended for leaders who use The *Resilient Marriage: Navigating Conflict with Your Spouse* in a small group or coaching setting. Copies of the book are available at Amazon.com. This leaders guide is available for no cost at : <https://churchconflict.org/free-resources>.

Leader's Summary: Communication

Key Points to Emphasize:

1. **The Power of Words:** Emphasize that words hold immense power to build or destroy. Encourage couples to use their words to bless and uplift each other, relying on the Holy Spirit for wisdom.
2. **Active Listening:** Stress that listening is an act of love and respect. Encourage couples to prioritize understanding over reacting, cultivating a culture of empathy in their marriage.
3. **Honesty and Transparency:** Highlight the importance of truthfulness and vulnerability in building trust. Honest communication strengthens the emotional and spiritual connection between spouses.
4. **Kindness in Speech:** Remind participants that kind and gracious words reflect God's love and foster a positive marital atmosphere.
5. **Resolving Misunderstandings:** Equip couples with strategies for patience, clarity, and prayerful reliance on God's guidance in resolving conflicts.

Practical Application:

- Encourage participants to apply one principle from the session in their daily interactions with their spouse.
- Highlight the importance of regular prayer for God's wisdom and grace in communication.

Leader's Encouragement:

- Remind the group that perfection isn't the goal; progress through God's grace is. Each step taken toward better communication honors God and strengthens their marriage.
- Share personal examples or Biblical narratives that illustrate the transformative power of Christ-centered communication.

Prayer Focus:

Pray for God's grace to manifest in our speech, the Holy Spirit's help in listening, and for peace and unity in moments of misunderstanding.

Leader's Summary: Spiritual Life

Key Points to Emphasize:

1. **Making God Central:** Encourage couples to prioritize God in their marriage through prayer, worship, and aligning decisions with Biblical principles.
2. **Individual Growth:** Stress the importance of personal spiritual growth as a foundation for contributing to a strong marriage.
3. **Prayer Together:** Highlight how praying together fosters intimacy with God and unity in the marriage.
4. **Facing Trials with Faith:** Remind couples that God's strength and peace sustain them during challenges and encourage them to rely on Him together.
5. **Pursuing Unity:** Emphasize that unity in Christ brings spiritual and emotional strength to the marriage, reflecting God's design.

Practical Application:

- Encourage couples to identify one habit they can adopt to deepen their spiritual connection.
- Suggest regular prayer, shared Bible study, or worship as a means to align their lives with God's purposes.

Leader's Encouragement:

- Reassure couples that spiritual growth is a journey and God's grace is sufficient for every step.
- Share personal or Biblical examples of how a Christ-centered spiritual life transforms relationships.

Prayer Focus:

Pray for God's presence in each marriage, for spiritual growth both individually and together, and for unity in Christ that reflects His love and purpose.

Leader's Summary: Finances

Key Points to Emphasize:

1. **God's Ownership and Provision:** Reinforce the understanding that all we have belongs to God, and He is faithful to provide for our needs as we trust in Him.
2. **Faith-Based Financial Unity:** Highlight the importance of making financial decisions together, rooted in prayer and mutual respect, to strengthen the marital bond and dependence on Jesus Christ.
3. **Cultivating Contentment and Generosity:** Encourage couples to practice gratitude and embrace generosity, reflecting Christ's love and freeing themselves from materialism.

Practical Application:

- **Stewardship as Worship:** Frame financial management as an act of worship and obedience to God.
- **Open Communication:** Stress the need for transparent and honest discussions about finances to avoid misunderstandings and build trust.

Leader's Encouragement:

- Remind participants that financial challenges are opportunities to grow in faith and reliance on God.
- Encourage them to seek God's wisdom and to support each other through prayer and practical steps.

Prayer Focus:

Pray for wisdom, unity, and contentment in financial matters. Ask God to help couples trust in His provision and to use their resources for His glory.

Leader's Summary: Parenting

Key Points to Emphasize:

1. **Parenting as a Calling:** Encourage parents to see their role as a sacred stewardship entrusted by God, requiring intentionality and reliance on His wisdom.
2. **Loving Discipline:** Highlight the importance of discipline as a loving act that nurtures growth and builds character, rather than punishment rooted in frustration.
3. **Building a Foundation of Faith:** Stress the role of parents in developing a Christ-centered home and modeling faith in action for their children.
4. **Encouragement and Affirmation:** Emphasize how words of affirmation and encouragement help children develop confidence, compassion, and a sense of worth in God's eyes.
5. **Parenting Through Challenges:** Remind parents that God's grace is sufficient for every parenting challenge and that leaning on Him brings strength and wisdom.

Practical Application:

- Encourage parents to identify one principle from the session to implement in their parenting this week.
- Suggest creating a family rhythm of prayer, Bible study, and worship to encourage spiritual growth in their children.

Leader's Encouragement:

- Remind parents that perfection is not the goal; God's grace fills the gaps in our parenting.
- Share stories or Biblical examples that illustrate the impact of Christ-centered parenting.

Prayer Focus:

Pray for God's wisdom, grace, and strength for parents as they navigate the joys and challenges of raising children. Ask for the Holy Spirit's guidance in developing faith, character, and unity within families.

Leader's Summary: Intimacy

Key Points to Emphasize:

1. **God's Design for Intimacy:** Emphasize that intimacy is a gift from God, designed to strengthen the marital bond and reflect His love.
2. **Overcoming Barriers:** Encourage couples to address emotional and relational obstacles with grace, forgiveness, and open communication.
3. **Building Emotional Connection:** Highlight the importance of prioritizing quality time and practicing active listening to deepen emotional intimacy.
4. **Physical Intimacy as a Gift:** Stress the significance of celebrating physical intimacy as a joyful and unifying aspect of marriage.
5. **Sustaining Intimacy:** Remind couples that sustaining intimacy requires intentionality, prayer, and a commitment to grow together over time.

Practical Application:

- Encourage couples to identify one area of intimacy to nurture or restore in their marriage this week.
- Suggest regular prayer together as a way to invite God's guidance and blessing on their intimacy.

Leader's Encouragement:

- Remind couples that intimacy is a journey, not a destination, and that God's grace is sufficient for every step.
- Share personal or Biblical examples of how God's design for intimacy can transform relationships.

Prayer Focus:

Pray for God's blessing on each couple's intimacy, for emotional healing where needed, and for wisdom to navigate challenges together. Ask for the Holy Spirit's guidance in fostering love, unity, and connection.

Leader's Summary: Extended Family

Key Points to Emphasize:

1. **Honoring Parents:** Stress the Biblical command to honor parents while balancing this with prioritizing the marriage relationship.
2. **Balancing Priorities:** Highlight the importance of clear communication and setting healthy boundaries to maintain harmony between extended family and marriage.
3. **Navigating Conflicts:** Encourage couples to approach conflicts with humility, forgiveness, and a Christ-like attitude.
4. **Building Healthy Relationships:** Emphasize the value of intentionality, gratitude, and prayer in fostering positive relationships with extended family.
5. **Reflecting Christ:** Remind couples that family relationships provide an opportunity to demonstrate Christ's love, grace, and peace.

Practical Application:

- Encourage couples to identify one relationship within their extended family to intentionally improve this week.
- Suggest ways to include prayer and Biblical principles in navigating family dynamics.

Leader's Encouragement:

- Reassure participants that family relationships are complex but can thrive when grounded in God's grace.
- Share personal or Biblical examples of how honoring God's principles in extended family relationships leads to peace and growth.

Prayer Focus:

Pray for wisdom, grace, and unity in extended family relationships. Ask God to empower the couples you are serving to reflect His love and to bring healing where needed.

Leader's Summary: Roles in Marriage

Key Points to Emphasize:

1. **God's Design for Roles:** Encourage couples to view marriage roles as God's plan for complementarity, unity, and reflection of His love.
2. **Leadership and Submission:** Stress that Biblical leadership and submission are rooted in service, humility, and mutual respect.
3. **Supporting Each Other:** Highlight the importance of encouraging and assisting each other in fulfilling their roles effectively.
4. **Shared Responsibilities:** Emphasize the value of partnership and teamwork in managing the practical aspects of life and family.
5. **Reflecting Christ:** Remind couples that their roles are opportunities to reflect Christ's humility, service, and love.

Practical Application:

- Encourage couples to identify one role-related area to focus on improving or enhancing this week.
- Suggest regular conversations about roles, responsibilities, and mutual support to maintain harmony and understanding.

Leader's Encouragement:

- Reassure couples that fulfilling roles in marriage is a journey, not a one-time achievement, and that God provides grace for growth.
- Share Biblical or personal examples of how honoring God's design for roles can transform a marriage.

Prayer Focus:

Pray for wisdom, humility, and unity as couples navigate their roles. Ask for God's guidance in reflecting His love and fulfilling their responsibilities with joy and grace.

Leader's Summary: Conflict Navigation

Key Points to Emphasize:

1. **Understanding Conflict:** Encourage couples to view conflict as an opportunity for growth and reconciliation, relying on God's wisdom and grace.
2. **Listening and Understanding:** Stress the importance of active listening and empathy as tools for de-escalating and resolving conflict.
3. **Speaking the Truth in Love:** Highlight how honest and gracious communication fosters resolution and unity.
4. **Forgiveness and Reconciliation:** Remind couples that forgiveness is essential for healing and restoring relationships.
5. **Pursuing Peace and Unity:** Emphasize that peace and unity are the ultimate goals of conflict navigation, reflecting God's heart.

Practical Application:

- Encourage couples to identify one area of conflict navigation to improve upon this week.
- Suggest praying for wisdom, grace, and peace before engaging in difficult conversations.

Leader's Encouragement:

- Reassure couples that navigating conflict is a journey of growth and dependence on God's grace.
- Share personal or Biblical examples of how applying God's principles has brought peace and restoration in relationships.

Prayer Focus:

Pray for wisdom, patience, and a spirit of humility as couples navigate conflict. Ask for God's guidance in fostering peace, unity, and reconciliation.