

“Patching Holes in the Smart Home”

Song of Solomon 5-6

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connect groups

PATH

Most marriages are marked by periodic skirmishes, but did you know that disagreements can actually *strengthen* your marriage instead of *weakening* it? A lot will depend on how you patch the holes left by a disagreement. Conflict resolution is an essential skill that will minimize permanent relational damage. Let’s take a look at Solomon’s marriage to his Shulamite bride, the first fight they had, and their final reconciliation.

I. Conflict Is Normal (5:1-6)

II. Collaboration Must Be Careful (5:7-9)

III. Conciliation Is Essential (6:3-4)

POINTS

Conflict Is Normal

- Ecclesiastes tells us that “two are better than one” (4:9). But two are also harder than one—two opinions, two ways of doing things, etc.
- Most marriages are marked by intermittent conflict and sometimes by all-out war. Most people don’t know how to fight fair; they fight to win, which hurts their relationship.
- In the text, Solomon wrote his finest poem about his favorite bride. In this book, he discussed their engagement, their wedding, and conflict resolution.
- Conflict began when Solomon made sexual advances toward his wife and she refused. A word of caution to husbands: if there is unresolved conflict, this is not a good idea.
- Conflict is normal; it’s part of being married. Couples need to recognize that relationships go through phases: attraction, infatuation, passion, and accommodation. Most conflicts arise during the accommodation phase.
- Why is conflict normal? First, people are human. Second, marriage joins two different lives and those differences cause friction.
- Although happy couples have the same amount of conflict as couples who ultimately divorce, the difference is that successful couples know how to manage conflict.ⁱ

Collaboration Must Be Careful

- There are four principles of conflict resolution.

1. Be careful whom you involve in your conflict. Don’t always involve parents, other family members, or friends.
 2. Find someone to help the conflict who will hear both sides of the story and see the conflict from an objective viewpoint. In the text, Solomon’s wife sought advice from other people and received poor advice. Christians must be careful from whom we seek advice (see Psalm 1:1).
 3. Never take a verbal swing at your spouse in public. Marriage is a powerful visual of how you treat the people you value the most.
 4. Don’t share details of disagreement with family—it will drive a wedge in your family.
- Solomon’s wife recognized the poor counsel she received. She then realized it was best to return to communicating with her husband.

Conciliation Is Essential

- Most couples don’t really fight until after they are married. Why? When dating, everything is voluntary, but with marriage things become compulsory and that can bring out the worst in someone.
- Solomon and his wife reconcile. Verse 3 indicates that the emotional distance between them has been overcome; they are now speaking *to* each other rather than *about* each other to others.
- Solomon and his wife came to realize that the goal of conflict resolution is not to win

a fight but to win a friend. If one person in a marriage loses, both people lose.

- The quicker one conciliates, the better. Unresolved anger is the enemy of marriage. Gary Smalley said, “When we bury anger inside us, it’s always buried alive.”ⁱⁱ
- Paul said, “Be angry and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil” (see Ephesians 4:26-27). Satan hates marriage. If we give Satan a foothold in our marriage, he’ll make it a stronghold. Wise couples take Paul’s words to heart and resolve their anger the same day, if possible.
- Researchers have determined that successful marriages maintain a 5-to-1 ratio of positive to negative interactions during conflict resolution. “For every negative interaction during conflict, a stable and happy marriage has five (or more) positive interactions.”ⁱⁱⁱ
- You can walk hand-in-hand without seeing eye-to-eye. Couples must resolve conflict and work toward conciliation.
- If you picture a perfect partner, you have two options: tear the picture up and accept that person or tear the person up and accept the picture. God wants us to tear the picture up and work on resolving conflict with Christian conviction.

PRACTICE

Connect Up: Satan hates marriage. Why?

Because God created it and it furthers His agenda in the world (see Genesis 2-3). How does marriage help promote God’s principles? Discuss these ideas from Genesis 2-3: spiritual and physical union, procreation, stewardship, help, and service. Look up 1 Corinthians 13. How does love help shape God’s agenda in the world through marriage? (Key descriptors: longsuffering, kind, not envious, doesn’t parade itself or behave rudely, is not puffed up, etc.) How does marriage help reflect our union with God?

Connect In: Pastor Skip recommends communication, collaboration, and

conciliation when dealing with conflict.

Share any other means you have used to reconcile with your spouse. Marriage Ministry recommends these ten steps:^{iv}

1. Admit you are powerless. (God is in control; He provides us with power through the Holy Spirit.)
2. Pray for your mate, your marriage, and yourself.
3. Adjust your expectations.
4. Resist the enemy.
5. Focus on changing yourself, not your mate.
6. Reach out for support.
7. Reconcile with your mate.
8. Meet your spouse’s most important

emotional needs.

9. Rebuild friendship and trust.
10. Seek immediate help if your marriage is in crisis.

Do you agree with this list? What more would you add?

Connect Out: How would advice from a counselor differ when directed toward a Christian couple versus a non-Christian couple? What might you change in your counsel of a non-believer? How does having the Holy Spirit living inside you affect the process of marriage communication, collaboration, and conciliation?

ⁱ Diane Sollee, “Teaching Couples How to Fish,” October, 2000, <http://www.smartmarriages.com/fish.html>, accessed 12/3/18.

ⁱⁱ Gary Smalley, “Anger in Marriage,” <http://globalchristiancenter.com/christianliving/marriage/33110-anger-in-marriage>, accessed 12/3/18.

ⁱⁱⁱ Kyle Benson, “The Magic Relationship Ratio, According to Science,” October 4, 2017, <https://www.gottman.com/blog/the-magic-relationship-ratio-according-to-science/>, accessed 12/3/18.

^{iv} Roy Milam, “Ten Steps to Restore Your Marriage,” <https://www.marriageministry.org/ten-steps-to-restore-your-marriage/>, accessed 12/3/18.