

Oak Valley Baptist Church

FIRST LOVE • FIGHTING, JESUS STYLE • EPHESIANS 5:25-27; 4:25-32 • 11/8/2021

MAIN POINT

God's Word gives us principles that show us how to handle conflict in marriage and all relationships with gospel-centered grace.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Are you the type of person who avoids conflict at all costs, tread carefully, or jump right in? Explain.

What do you think is the goal of most people in conflict—to come to a peaceful resolution, to move on, to win, or something else? Explain.

Is conflict in marriage unhealthy? Explain.

| WATCH THE SESSION 4 VIDEO FEATURING J. D. GREER.

In the 4th video session, JD Greer notes that the problems that split up marriages are not usually some special class of problems, but problems that are common to every marriage. He says these are, "individual people issues that just come out in marriage. But one of the partners doesn't know how to handle conflict well and they don't know how to keep minor problems from becoming major problems." In today's session, we'll explore how Ephesians 5 teaches us how to fight, Jesus style.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ EPHESIANS 5:25-27.

Why did Jesus give Himself for the church (v. 26)?

What does it mean to sanctify someone?

How has God used a marriage relationship, or another relationship, to sanctify you in the past?

Sanctification means to make holy. JD explains, “If you want to understand why there is conflict in your relationships, what God’s purpose is in that conflict, and what you are to be doing about that conflict, understand this principle: one of God’s primary goals in marriage is not making you happy through a suitable marriage partner, it’s making you holy by teaching you to wash the feet of another sinner.”

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ EPHESIANS 4:25-32.

What principles for conflict in marriage can you find in this passage?

What would it look like in marriage for a person to be angry and not sin?

On a scale of 1 to 10, how important would you say that verses 29 and 31 are within marriage? Why are careless words so destructive?

Why do you think Paul didn’t give any exceptions in verse 32? Are you literally supposed to be kind to one another, tenderhearted, and forgiving all the time?

When might we be tempted to exhibit one of these negative qualities? How can we demonstrate the positive instead?

How might remembering that Christ has forgiven you and saved you by His grace help you approach conflict differently?

JD notes it is important to understand the source of anger, bitterness, rage, and slander. He explains these things come from “desires that have become idolatrous, or taking upon ourselves the responsibility for vengeance. Nothing in you is supposed to be so important to you that it produces malice, wrath, or hatred when you miss out on it. When you see those emotions, they all point to the fact that something has become an idol.”

How does it help you deal with conflict to know that every single wrong that has ever been done to you will be repaid either by Jesus on the cross or by the person who wronged you in hell?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

JD said grace-saturated, gospel-centered fighting looks like this: “Examine your heart, overlook what you can, be practical in how you fight, be quick to listen and slow to speak, seek their satisfaction, not your vindication, believe in God’s overriding purpose in you marriage, speak grace-saturated words, don’t give up until there is no

longer a chance of reconciliation, truly forgive, and do all things out of reverence for Christ.” Which of these do you struggle with the most? Why?

Do you truly believe that only the power of grace changes a heart? What can you do to grow in that understanding to the point that it affects your relationships?

If Ephesians 4:25-32 is the standard, then have you been fighting like Jesus? What needs to change?

PRAYER

Thank God for His principles that help you know how to develop a healthy, grace-centered marriage. Confess your tendency to fight unlike Jesus wants you to, and ask Him to help you put away anger, bitterness, and wrath, to be kind and forgiving, and to only use words that give grace.

COMMENTARY

| EPHESIANS 5:25-27

5:25-27. After instructing wives to submit to their husbands, he instructs husbands to love their wives so completely and so righteously that the wife need never fear or suffer from her life of submission. Husbands are to love their wives just as Christ loved the church. How did Christ love the church? He gave Himself up for her. Jesus dedicated His life to the establishment and welfare of the church. He ultimately gave His life for the church. To that degree, and in that quality, the husband is to love his wife. He is to give himself up for her. He is to dedicate his life to the physical, emotional, and spiritual welfare of his wife. Following the example of Christ, he is to give his wife not only all that he has but also all that he is. When a husband loves his wife so completely, the wife need never fear submission.

Paul goes on to extend the picture of Christ and the church. Christ loved the church that He might make her holy, or set her apart for Himself. He did this by the washing with water through the word. Some Bible teachers do not think Paul is referring to water (baptism) in this verse. They understand the water to be a figure of speech, referring to the cleansing that the Holy Spirit brings to the soul through repentance, after hearing the Word of God. It is as Jesus said in John 15:3, “You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.” Applying water to the outside of the physical body can have no effect whatsoever to the spiritual cleansing that makes one holy. Through repentance, the water of the word reaches the innermost recesses of the soul, cleansing and making it holy.

Other scholars, however, believe that Paul is, indeed, alluding to baptism here, understanding that the early church would only have baptized someone who had truly repented. In this understanding, baptism would be an outward sign of repentance and of the spiritual cleansing resulting from the repentance, itself a result of hearing and obeying the Word. The New Testament does not suggest that baptism cleanses a person apart from repentance or that baptism apart from personal faith can save a person. We might amplify the meaning of this phrase by saying that the true church heard the Word of Christ preached and believed it. They were born again, regenerated, washed and cleansed spiritually by believing the Word. If Paul were alluding to baptism here, then the washing of the water in baptism would be symbolic of the inner cleansing that had already taken place through the Word. The result of this work of Christ is that the church is radiant ... without spot or wrinkle ... holy and without blemish. If a husband loves his wife as Christ loved the church, his love and care will have a sanctifying influence on the wife, who will experience personal benefit and progress as a result. The wife will never be perfect, but she becomes more than she would if the husband does not love her as Christ loved the church.

| EPHESIANS 4:25-32

4:29. Paul gave concrete examples of how Christ followers live out this worthy walk, beginning in verse 25. In each case, a prohibition is balanced with a command. Here, it is not “corrupting talk” but wholesome speech. By corrupting talk Paul meant what is vulgar, crude, or abusive. This is a characteristic of the non-Christian lifestyle that believers have renounced. What is to replace it? Speech that is intentionally good for the building up of others (Prov. 15:23).

4:30. Parents grieve when their children squabble. How much more must the Spirit lament when believers squabble with one another? After all, He is Holy, and He intends for us to become more and more holy. This is why He “sealed” us when we were converted. From the beginning of our Christian life when we were sealed until the end when we are fully redeemed, we are to grow in being like Christ.

4:31. In verses 22-24 Paul had used the notion of taking off (the old man) and putting on (the new man) in reference to the decisive change that happened at conversion. Here he used similar language to speak of six sinful attitudes and actions. Believers constantly seek to keep these removed from their lives. They are all poisonous to personal relationships. “Bitterness” can be translated “sourness,” referring to a cynical or resentful outlook. “Anger” refers to an outburst of rage or a flash of irritation. “Wrath” (negatively) means “a sullen, settled angry attitude” (but see 5:6 for God’s wrath). “Clamor” refers to loud voices raised in a quarrel or in a brawl. “Slander”

means “speaking evil of others, wishing to hurt their reputation.” “Malice” summarizes all of the preceding and can also be translated “evil” or “wickedness.”

4:32. In contrast to the six vices are three virtues by which believers are to relate to one another. These are God-like qualities He has extended to us. “Kind” means caring or showing love practically (see 2:7 for God’s kindness). “Compassionate” (tenderhearted) refers to being moved on one’s insides in response to a need and then acting. “Forgiving” is literally “acting with grace,” and forgiving the offenses of others is certainly one of the best ways to extend undeserved favor. Paul pointed out specifically that this is a God-like quality. Because He forgave in Christ, we are to extend forgiveness to others.