

The Talk

Fight the One You're With

Learn to fight FOR the one you're with (Song of Solomon 5:1-8). Every marriage has conflict and needs work. It's inevitable. In fact, marriage magnifies our sinfulness rather than minimizing it. We learn to handle conflict within marriage in *healthy* ways by first accepting that fights will occur, and then by preparing for when they surface. We prepare for conflict by surrounding our marriages with wise friends, and by establishing and sticking to some critical ground rules (e.g. never respond harshly, never seek to shame your spouse in public, never use sex to manipulate, etc.). We also prepare for conflict by always going to God when those difficulties arise, trusting Him to change you and your spouse. And we always forgive, not because forgiveness is deserved but because we have been forgiven much (Matthew 18:21-35).

GETTING STARTED

How do you typically react when conflict arises in a relationship? Do you usually avoid the conflict at all costs, passionately compete, give in, compromise, etc.? When conflict occurs, are you a verbal or internal processor, and why does that matter?

GO DEEPER

1. In Song of Solomon 5:1-8, even Solomon (in all his wisdom) experiences a late-night conflict with his beloved wife. How does marriage magnify our sinfulness rather than minimize it? Why is it important to realize that conflict is inevitable in *every* marriage?
2. What does it mean to *always go to God with your conflict* in marriage or in any significant relationship? What can happen (and often does happen) if we invite God into the conflict?
3. According to Matthew 18:32-35, how might forgiveness (or unforgiveness) affect a marriage? What does it mean to forgive, and what keeps us in a place of unforgiveness?

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. When conflict arises in your marriage or in a significant relationship, what are some of the things you tend to say or do that might be unhealthy? What might be some healthy practices or ground rules you have in place that help you resolve that conflict well?
2. How challenging is it for you to forgive your spouse or a significant person in your life right now, and why? What makes forgiveness possible?
3. What conflict are you experiencing right now that you need to take to God? What needs to change in you, and what needs to change in your spouse?

PRACTICE IT NOW

Take time as a group to purposefully pray for an increased willingness and capacity to fight **FOR** our spouse (or for a significant relationship) rather than against. Ask God to help you bring every conflict to Him, and to give you the ability to forgive, even when our spouse continues to do or say hurtful things. Ask Him to instill in you a greater desire to fight well and to handle conflict in healthy ways.

BLESS

Inviting someone to eat a meal with you communicates a high level of value and importance. Who can you reach out to this week and eat a meal with that doesn't know Jesus but needs to feel valued and honored?