

A photograph of a man and a woman standing on a beach, seen from behind. They are embracing each other. The man is on the left, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and blue jeans. The woman is on the right, wearing a light-colored long-sleeved shirt and blue jeans. They are standing on a sandy beach with the ocean in the background. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright glow and lens flare. The sky is a mix of light and dark tones, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is romantic and peaceful.

Connecting Through Conflict

Alan and Nicole Parker
Collegedale Church, February 13, 2016



The Bananas!

- ▶ Is conflict healthy?
- ▶ The expression of conflict suggests trust and openness
- ▶ What would happen without such expression?
 - ▶ Hidden anger and resentment
 - ▶ Bad decisions
 - ▶ Shallow relationships



So, we love conflict, right?



What Are You
Communicating About?

- ▶ Studied 130 newlyweds over 6 years with videotaped interaction.
- ▶ Compared this group with another study of couples studied over 13 years.
- ▶ Looked for patterns in stable, happy couples.

Surprising result: even though couples were taught communication techniques such as “I messages” and “active listening” they rarely used them in the midst of conflict.

Instead, they found two critical factors to success. If the wife, who often initiated an issue, was able to do it in a gentle, compassionate and soothing way and if the husband responded by being open to the suggestions of his wife, the couple happily negotiated the conflict.

1. Criticism
“Why do you always?”
2. Contempt
Mocking, snide remarks, sarcasm
3. Defensiveness
Explain, excuse, deny responsibility
4. Stonewalling
Withdraw, look away, stop listening

How to solve conflict:

“Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.”

Ministry

vs.

manipulation

- ▶ Your contentment will rise and fall on your spouse's behavior.
- ▶ When your spouse does not please you, you will seek to manipulate him or her.
- ▶ You will swing from apathy to resentment, anger, disillusionment or depression.
- ▶ You may find yourself thinking, "If only he/she would _____, I would be happy."
- ▶ You will approach conflict self-protectively.

If your goal is happiness...

- ▶ You will rely on Christ as the rock-solid foundation of your happiness , lovability and worth
- ▶ You will approach conflicts with a primary desire “not to be ministered unto, but to minister.”
- ▶ You will respond to conflicts lovingly and respectfully, whether or not you feel loved or respected.
- ▶ You will bring to your home an atmosphere of heaven.

If your goal is holiness...

JAMES 4:1 – 3



The Happiness Goal

Learning to minister through conflict



Fighting God's Way

- ▶ A ministry perspective leads you to ask, “How can I understand this person’s perspective and minister to them?”
- ▶ A selfish perspective is more intent on, “How can I get this person to understand me and do what I want?”

Conflict is often the result of unmet expectations.

Therefore, the answer is not to defend yourself ...

But to understand the underlying expectation and to affirm the other person's need

▶ Listen

▶ Understand

▶ Validate



The Affirmation Sandwich



The Love She Most Desires

LOVE & RESPECT

The Respect He Desperately Needs

DR. EMERSON
EGGERICHS

EGGERICHS
DR. EMERSON

“Five out of ten marriages today are ending in divorce because love alone is *not* enough. Yes, love is vital, especially for the wife, but what we have missed is the husband’s need for respect....The wife can fulfill her need to be loved by giving her husband what he needs—respect.” *Love and Respect*, p. 1

“all you need is love”

“Each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.”

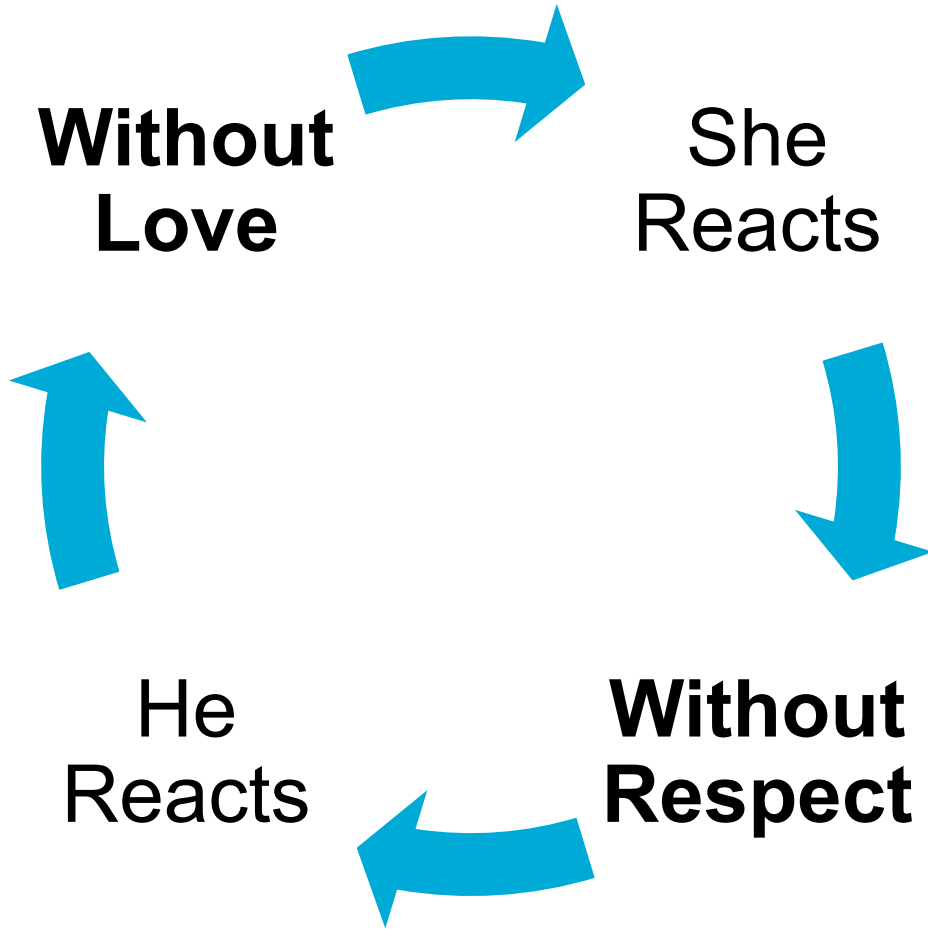
**Without
Love**

**She
Reacts**

**He
Reacts**

**Without
Respect**

The Crazy Cycle



“When a husband feels disrespected, it is especially hard to love his wife. When a wife feels unloved, it is especially hard to respect her husband.” *Love and Respect*, p.16

His Love

Motivates

Motivates

**Her
Respect**

The Energizing Cycle

“A husband is to obey the command to love even if his wife does not obey this command to respect, and a wife is to obey the command to respect even if the husband does not obey the command to love.” *Love and Respect*, pp. 15, 16

“I know all that love and respect stuff. And I *would* respect him, if he would just act respectable! If he wants respect, he’s going to have to earn it!”

It's not about the nail

- ▶ There are ways to communicate the need for love and respect without attacking the other person
 - ▶ Let Christ fill your heart so you are not a “thirsty sponge”
 - ▶ Pray before you speak
 - ▶ Assume that the other person does love and respect you
 - ▶ Seek to minister and tune in to the other person’s feelings instead of your own
 - ▶ Evaluate if it is a “big deal”
 - ▶ Communicate in a Christlike way
 - ▶ Listen nondefensively

“That felt disrespectful/unloving”



Jeremiah 2:13



SEEING with new EYES

- ▶ Words of Affirmation
- ▶ Quality Time
- ▶ Receiving Gifts
- ▶ Acts of Service
- ▶ Physical Touch

Five love languages

- ▶ Words of Respect (Job well done)
- ▶ Together Time (Side-by-side)
- ▶ Receiving a Gift (Longed-for prize)
- ▶ Acts of Dominion (House-in-order/work)
- ▶ Physical Arousal (Sex)

Five love languages
(FOR MEN?)

- ▶ Identify one to two areas which are the “love languages” of your spouse/friend. What are ways in which you can minister to your spouse/friend in these areas.
- ▶ Then identify one or two areas which are your personal “love languages.” What are helpful things that the other person can do to minister to you.
- ▶ Share your reflections with each other.

COUPLE or SELF-REFLECTION EXERCISE

RELATIONSHIPS

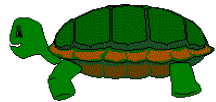
**TEDDY
BEAR**



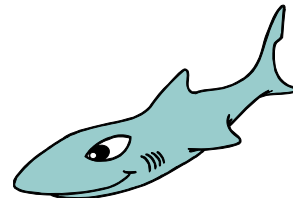
OWL



FOX



TURTLE



SHARK

GOALS

Conflict Styles

- ▶ Almost any of these styles can become essentially selfish. I attack or withdraw or compromise or accommodate in the hopes that this will keep me happy.
- ▶ A ministry perspective has growth toward holiness as the goal. Therefore, the point is not to change the other person to do what I want but to minister to the other person so that we both become what God wants.

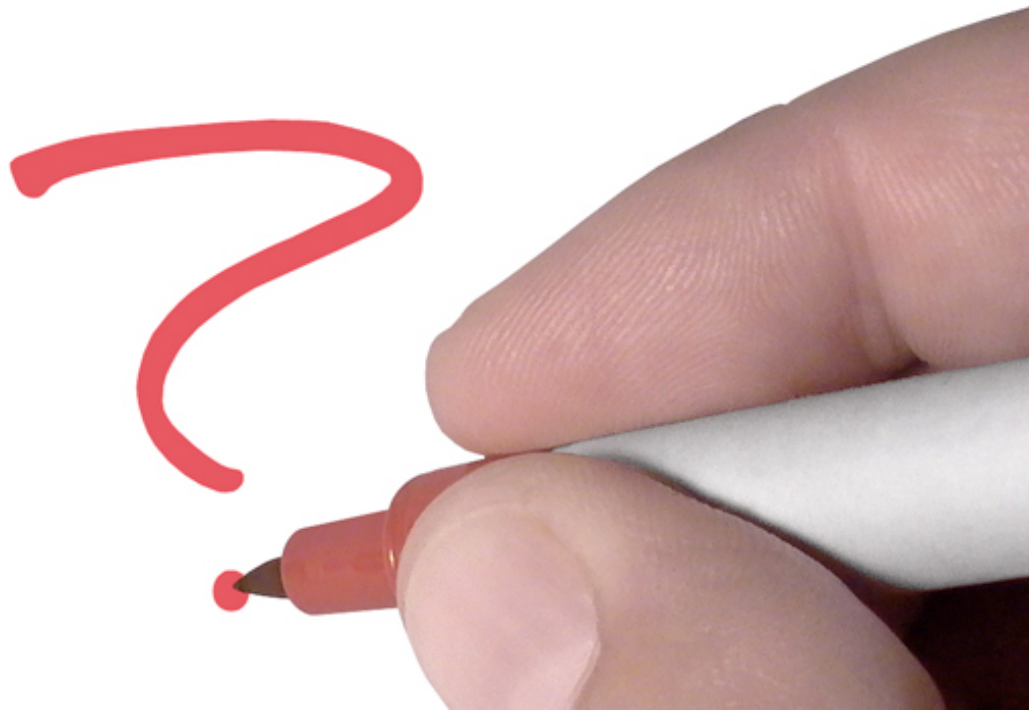


Not exactly happily ever after ... but close

1. Set a Time and Place



2. Define the Problem



3. Each person states how they have contributed – “We Problem”



4. List Past Attempts That Were Not Successful



5. Brainstorm. What are possible solutions?



6. Discuss and evaluate to see which solutions will work.



7. Agree on One Solution



8. Agree on how each person will work toward the solution



9. Set up another meeting.



10. Reward progress



TEN STEPS