

GOOD CONFLICT

START UP

A turning point for almost any close relationship is conflict. How we handle that conflict and hurt will take our relationship one way or the other. If we mishandle it, hurt feelings can easily build into contempt. However, if the conflict is handled well, it can actually become a gateway to the kind of relational depth we really want.

- How was conflict handled in your home growing up? How do you think that shaped the way you view conflict today?
- Jeff said there are three types of people: stuffers, sprayers, and stealth bombers. Stuffers avoid conflict by burying it deep inside. Sprayers have no problem telling it like it is, and no one has to wonder if they are frustrated. Stealth bombers are passive aggressive, using sarcasm or side comments to deal with anger. Which of these three is your natural bent? Has it changed over time?

DISCUSS TOGETHER

Read **Ephesians 4:25-27** and **Matthew 5:23-24** together.

- What are some different principles we see from these passages about how to deal with conflict?
- Notice the verse assumes it is okay to be angry. But it also says to not let it turn sinful. How would you know when anger has crossed the line into sin? What have you learned about the difference between healthy anger and unhealthy anger?
- The initial emotions we feel in a conflict are rarely a finished product. What have you learned about dealing with conflict quickly while also taking time to process your emotions well?

Now, read **Ephesians 4:29-32**.

- How does Paul teach us to “fight fair”? What are some specific ways we can hit “below the belt”?
- In the middle of a conflict, do you find yourself wanting to “win” more than resolve or forgive? Why is trying to win an argument counterproductive?
- Author Gary Thomas writes, “Couples don’t fall out of love so much as they fall out of repentance.” What do you think he means by this? When have you found it difficult to say the words, “I’m sorry”?
- According to counselors, people tend to do four things in a conflict: **withdraw** (shut down verbally, physically, and emotionally); **escalate** (raise voice and get dramatic); **negative interpretation** (filter everything through a negative lens where the other person can’t do or say anything right); or **invalidate** (say things like, “Quit being so insensitive,” or “That’s so stupid.”). Which of these behaviors is your “go-to” move when you face conflict?
- In light of today’s discussion, what is one way you can be better at speaking the truth in love and handling conflict? Is there a hard conversation you need to have?

LIVE BIG

- There is so much pulling against relationships, friendships, marriages, and families today. Take a moment to pray for your relationships in your group.
- Whether we know it or not, there is conflict all around us in our neighborhoods, workplaces, and schools. Is there some way you can be helpful or someone you think may be hurting you can reach out to in order to help them process a hurt or conflict well?