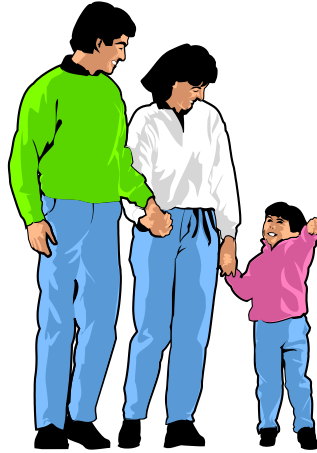


# HOME IMPROVEMENT

**Enriching Values &  
Strengthening Relationships**



**Presented to our Guests by the Kirkland church of Christ**  
*Where Families Build Eternal Homes*

*[www.kirklandchurchofChrist.com](http://www.kirklandchurchofChrist.com)*

**By Brent Hunter, Evangelist and Bible teacher**

**Brent Hunter** has been active in holding marriage and parenting workshops for churches all over the US, and has been a successful marriage counselor for the last twenty-five years. Brent worked for 26 years as both a professor and administrator at Florida College (a four year Christian college in Temple Terrace, FL), where he taught Bible, Speech, and Marriage and Family. During his years on the faculty he was selected by his students as the top rated lecturing professor on multiple occasions. Brent is a certified seminar facilitator for the *Family Dynamics Institute* and licensed to administer the *Prepare and Enrich* diagnostic tool for premarital and marital counseling. He has been happily married to his wife Gail for 36 years, and they have two married daughters, and three grandchildren.

Brent has also done evangelistic work with churches since he was 20 years old. He has worked with congregations in Florida, Kentucky, California, and now he has moved to the great Northwest. Brent's focus is primarily on marriage and family enrichment with a focus towards *preventing problems*. We are pleased to have him as our featured speaker for these practical lessons on marriage and family here at the Kirkland church of Christ - *Where families build eternal homes!*

In addition to being available for Bible studies for anyone who is interested, on a limited basis, Brent provides couples with Bible based marriage counseling. Brent can be reached on his cell phone: 1-502-445-5421 or at [cbhunter53@gmail.com](mailto:cbhunter53@gmail.com). Please feel free to contact him if he can assist you with any of your spiritual needs or questions.

**September 18 and September 20**

Friday night and Sunday morning and afternoon.

*Please check out our website ([www.kirklandchurchofChrist.com](http://www.kirklandchurchofChrist.com)) for many more lessons on marriage and family and other Bible lessons by Brent.*



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# Kirkland Church of Christ

*Where Families Build Eternal Homes*

10421 NE 140th St. Kirkland, WA 98034

[www.kirklandchurchofChrist.com](http://www.kirklandchurchofChrist.com)

## 2015 Special Events

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### **March 6th & 8th**

*Friday 7:30 pm - Marriage: A Spiritual Covenant*

*\*Sunday 10:30 am - Understanding Marriage Vows and Reinstilling Commitment*

### **April 10th**

*Friday 7:00 pm - Annual Area Wide Spring Singing: "How Deep is the Father's Love"*

### **Sept 18th & 20th**

*Friday 7:30 pm - Maintaining Peace & Tranquility in the Home: Principles for Resolving Conflict Successfully!*

*\*Sunday 10:30 am - Principles for Resolving Conflict Successfully, Part 2*

### **Nov 20th & 22nd**

*Friday 7:30 pm - Parenting Through the Proverbs*

*\*Sunday 10:30 am - Honor Father and Mother*

*\* A potluck will be held for all attendees following the Sunday morning lesson.  
All are welcome!  
Directions to the potluck location will be provided at the morning services.*



# TEN KEYS FOR LOVING & CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS

## *Resolving Conflicts in Life and Marriage*

### *Parts one – Keys 1-5*

### *Parts two – Keys 6-10*

By Brent Hunter

Evangelist for the Kirkland church of Christ

Cbhunter53@gmail.com

## Introduction

A. Two ideas to remember about hostility:

1. It is natural. Motion (growth) requires some friction.

a. Marriages are made in heaven, but so are *thunder and lightning storms!*

b. Marriage is similar to the merging of two great rivers

1) Merging into ONE two different lives, backgrounds, habits, etc.

2) Trying to share the same time, space & resources

3) What happens when rivers merge together – RAPIDS! WHITE WATER.

4) It is only natural that the blending of lives together will produce some friction, disagreements and conflicts.

2. Since it is inevitable, you must agree to settle differences "agreeably." **It is the #1 interpersonal skill necessary for long-term marital stability, so make sure you master it!**

B. Handled properly conflict can be a good thing. Learn to view "*fights*" not as tragedies, but opportunities!

1. Venting personal frustrations through lips which have learned how to do so can serve a wonderful purpose.

2. Skill and self-control can turn potentially destructive squabbles into "*fair fights*" which solve problems and yield positive results!

3. Remember: The secret to a good marriage is not finding the right person, but *learning to argue well with the person you have found!*

## KEY #1—BE DRIVEN BY LOVE!

A. This is the **one principle** from which all the others spring (we're laying the foundation). Husbands and wives are to love each other, **Eph. 5:25; Titus 2:4.**

1. That means more than just having warm feelings of affection for each other. It means I always want to act in their best interest – always seeking their good and never doing anything to hurt them.

2. It's not just an emotion; love is a decision to behave in a certain way. When Paul defined love, he described it as **a way of behaving**, I Cor. 13:4ff.

3. If we want to manage conflict well, then we need to be sure that our actions are **always driven by love**, I must never do anything thing to hurt. I should always be acting in the best interest of my spouse.

a. Love needs to be the atmosphere that fills our homes and pulses through our marriage conflicts.

b. Before we speak or act, we need to ask, "Am I acting with love?"

c. Folks, that's not just a good idea, that's what God demands.

- B. Now, the other principles spring from this one. If you want to act with love, then before you can address a conflict, you first need to...

**KEY #2 -- DO YOUR THING TO COOL OFF!** (Eph 4:26; Prov 29:8, 30:33, 17:27)

- A. Never be ashamed of anger--it is natural, not sinful. The only thing you need to regret is handling it badly. Prov 29:22 "An angry man stirs up strife, and a hot-tempered man abounds in transgression."
- B. Since you are literally in a state of **intoxication** when your *"fuse is lit,"* reduce the emotional state before a discussion begins.
1. *"There is more hope for a fool than a man of quick temper."* Prov 29:20
  2. *"...and a wrathful man stirreth up contention."* Prov 15:18
  3. **IF YOU ARGUE WHEN YOU'RE ANGRY, YOU'RE APT TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE!**
- C. If we are driven by love, we will do whatever it takes to cool off FIRST!
1. Engage in some physical activity
  2. Go for a walk
  3. Take a hot bath
  4. Pray alone--it calms the spirit so you can see the situation more clearly.
- D. The key here is this: **Rule our passions, rather than allowing our passions to rule us!**
1. Prov 16:32 "He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, then he who captures a city."
  2. **No one likes living with a volcano** – we must cool off and get anger under control.
- D. Afterwards, you may just decide to forget the whole thing! (Prov 17:9, 19:11)

***If not, proceed to Rule #3!***

**KEY #3--ARGUE WITH THE RIGHT PERSON** (Prov 3:30, 25:9)

- A. Remember to express frustration/anger toward the person you are really angry with and **not some innocent party.**
1. Be honest. Husbands, how many times are you angry and frustrated at something at work, and the poor wife suddenly can't do anything right?
  2. Similarly, wives can be frustrated after dealing with the kids all day and consequently are ready for war as soon as their husbands come in the door?
  3. We all do it – and it is grossly unfair!
- Prov 3:30 "Do not accuse a man for no reason – when he has done you no harm!"**
- B. Beating up on innocent third parties is called *"dumping."*
1. **Dumping is cruel,** it allows you to **escape** the real person or issue, and **resolves nothing.** It only makes matters worse!
  2. So, have the courage to **make sure** you are bringing your complaint to the right person.

**KEY #4--ARGUE ABOUT THE RIGHT THING** (Prov 15:7, 28)

- A. Seems obvious too, but how many marriage conflicts are really about an **unspoken agenda?** Many arguments are fought about the **wrong subjects.**
1. Ex. Husband criticizes his wife's housekeeping when the real complaint is a lack of intimacy in the relationship!
  2. Ex. Wife criticizes her husband's tardiness when the real issue is she is feeling neglected?
  3. We must be **in touch with our feelings** and ask, *"Am I really angry because of this or is it something else?"*
  4. Sometimes our arguments solve nothing because we are not talking about the right thing.



5. A good indication of a hidden agenda is when OUR ANGER IS OUT OF PROPORTION TO THE OFFENSE.
- B. The issue here is one of Honesty, Eph 4:25.**
1. We must learn to be upfront about our frustrations and stop working with a hidden agenda.
  2. Not only is it dishonest and unfair, but arguing about the wrong thing does nothing to solve the problem!
  3. Jn 8:32 Jesus said: "*The truth will set you FREE.*" You will not have an *authentic* successful marriage unless you are honest.

**KEY #5--ARGUE AT THE RIGHT TIME** (Ecc 3:1-11; Prov 25:8)

- A. Both must agree the time is right before beginning. Something as simple as timing can make a big difference in how we resolve our marriage conflicts.
- B. Here are some times ***not*** to argue:
  1. **In front of company.** To do so is *degrading. Violates trust.*
  2. **When there is not enough time to finish.** Have you ever found yourself in the middle of big argument right before company arrives or it is time to go to services?
  3. **When either party is hungry or tired**
  4. **Just as one or both spouses comes home from work**
    - a. 80% of marital fights occur between 5-6 pm
    - b. Instead of celebrating being together, we dump on each other. That is a bad time.
    - c. Good rule of thumb: Do not discuss problems until **after** dinner.

**CONCLUSION:**

- A. Mature partners know that differences are not wrong. Conflicts can be worked out *fairly, amiably, and lovingly.*
- B. Both parties must be honest so a wall of silence will not build up and drive them apart.
- C. These keys will provide wisdom and guidance in how to maintain close and loving relationships.
- D. Please remember to also include the last five keys discussed in part two of this lesson.

# TEN KEYS FOR LOVING & CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS

## *Resolving Conflicts in Life and Marriage*

### *Parts two – Keys 6-10*

By Brent Hunter

#### **Intro.**

- A. As discussed in part one, the secret to a good marriage is not finding the right person, but *learning to argue well with the person you have found!*
- B. The key to long term marital stability and closeness is learning to resolve conflicts successfully.
- C. We dealt with Keys 1-5 in part one and now we will discuss Keys 6-10.

#### **KEY #6--DON'T BE HISTORICAL** (Eph 4:26)

- A. Man complains, "My wife always gets historical." Amused, his friend replied, "I think you mean hysterical." "No, I mean historical," he said. When we argue she reminds me of everything I've ever done wrong."
  1. Why do we drag up the past? Often we are losing an argument so past blunders are brought up in order to gain some advantage.
  2. Example: "I might be wrong now, but you are just as guilty." This moves us in the wrong direction!
- B. Be committed to **not bring up past fights**.
  1. "*He that harpeth on a matter separateth chief friends.*" Prov 17:9
  2. Bringing up items that you thought were resolved **breeds mistrust** and a **lack of confidence** in the relationship.
- C. The real issue is one of **FORGIVENESS**. Eph 4:31-32
  1. Once an argument is resolved, it is to be **buried and never resurrected**. Don't bury the hatchet with the handle left sticking out of the ground.
  2. Before ending an argument, make sure it is closed for both parties.
    - a. If it's not, don't drop it until it is resolved.
    - b. But when it is finished, then **both must agree is over**. Period.
  3. Paul said that in true love, I Cor 13:5 one does not "*Take into account a wrong suffered.*" Love means we stop keeping the books.

#### **KEY #7 – DON'T RAISE YOUR VOICE.**

- A. That is tough if increasing the decibel level is how you grew up! To some, a fight isn't a fight without some yelling!
  1. Truth is, loudness does not make things better; and it does not communicate love. In fact, it's often when we start getting louder that hurtful things come out of our mouth.
  2. Yelling at someone is *disrespectful and degrading*. It certainly is not the golden rule.
  3. Harsh, loud words are **not consistent with the love that should drive our actions**. Paul said that love leads us to be "kind," (I Cor 13.4).
- B. **Listen to Solomon**: Prov 15:1, "***A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.***"
  1. Here is the key: "Lower your voice one octave, rather than raising it two."
  2. Make a point as the heat goes up in a discussion, to take the volume down.

#### **KEY #8--AVOID NAME CALLING** (Prov 14:22, 27:4)

- A. There is no excuse for hurling insults or profane names at loved ones.
  - 1. Abusing intimacy and resorting to *"knife twisting"* are especially harmful.
  - 2. Thoughtless names (labels) puncture deeply and are remembered for years.
- B. Three reasons why personal verbal assaults are so destructive:
  - 1. They throw an argument off-track and does not lead to a resolution.
  - 2. They focus attention on the mate, not on solving the problem.
  - 3. They hurt the relationship and **ruin mutual respect**.
- C. Three suggestions:
  - 1. Tackle the problem, not the person.
  - 2. Replace **"you"** statements with **"I"** statements. (Instead of *"You lazy bum!"* say, *"I feel you're not working as hard as you could."*)
  - 3. Be determined to only use words that edify! Eph 4:29 "Let no unwholesome words proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so it will give grace to those who hear."
- D. Insults, sarcasm, filthy and profane names are sometimes used with our spouse that we would never even consider using with anyone else!
  - 1. We should treat our families the best, not the worst!
  - 2. I Cor 13 tells us love is patient, kind, does not act unbecomingly.
- E. Name calling is counter-productive because it often creates a problem that is bigger than the original problem that provoked the argument!
  - 1. Careless insults can create pain for years to come. How absurd!
  - 2. Solomon in Prov 12:8 "There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing."
  - 3. Words are powerful. If we want to manage our conflicts well, we must use words that edify!

**KEY #9--AVOID "STAMP-SAVING"** (Prov 10:18)

- A. Some save up grievances like stamps, waiting until the book is full to cash it in.
  - 1. Ex. Unloading other complaints in rapid succession during an argument over something else.
  - 2. Be sure to only discuss one disagreement at a time.
- B. Don't let things build up! Foster the type of relationship where you can express irritations as they occur.
- C. Stamp-saving...
  - 1. Overwhelms the poor mate who is bombarded with so much all at once.
  - 2. Is disconcerting to the one who discovers that true feelings weren't revealed earlier.
  - 3. Breeds both a lack of trust as well as confidence.
- D. **The cure:**
  - 1. Express displeasure at the earliest convenient time.
  - 2. Mention it next time it occurs (if a recurring fault), and not during an argument about something else or choose to forget it forever!

**KEY #10: Don't Focus on Winning.** (Eph 5:21) "Submit yourselves one to the other in the fear of Christ."

- A. If we're not careful, our marriage conflicts can take on a life of their own.
  - 1. The focus can become **winning the argument rather than reaching a resolution**.
  - 2. When that happens, *everything changes*.
    - a. We begin to use every trick in the book so we can win.
    - b. We refuse to admit any wrong or acknowledge any validity in what the other person is saying, less we give them some advantage.

- c. We begin to pick a part every little detail of what is said, i.e. "I don't forget to take out the trash all the time; I did once last year!"
  - d. The conversation begins to be dotted with challenges, i.e. "prove it" or "give me one example when I did that."
3. When we reach that point, **no one will come out a winner**. We may win the battle, but ultimately lose the war...and the "good will" and mutual respect we both need and desire for a good relationship.

**B.** What we need to remember is that marriage is a *cooperative enterprise*.

- 1. If my goal is to **win and get my way**, then I'm going to make my spouse miserable.
- 2. The goal should be to **reach a solution that will please God** and that both of us can live with. A good marriage provides for some "give and take."
- 3. I've got to be unselfish and take into account the needs of my spouse as we try to work this out, **Phil. 2:3-4**.
- 4. In **I Cor. 13:5 Paul says that love "does not seek it's own."**
- 5. We need to accept our share of the blame and never resort to threats or give ultimatums. We certainly should never use sex or money as weapon.
- 6. We need to reach a conclusion that if possible will suit both, not just one.

To do otherwise may help us win more arguments, but in the end, **we'll lose the war – and perhaps our marriage too!**

**CONCLUSION:**

- A. Take these home and make a pact to live by God's principles when managing conflicts.
- B. Marriage run by God's principles can be a little bit of Paradise left to bless both man and woman in a sinful world.
- C. Remember: *"Marriages are made in heaven, but the maintenance contract must be maintained on earth."*
- D. God has the answers for our every need, do you rely and depend upon Him for help?

# HOW YOUR LORD WANTS YOU TO COMMUNICATE

(Guidelines to talking, listening and interacting.)

(Luke 6:46)

Scriptures are quoted from the NIV.

- 1 - *"Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone." Col. 4:6*
- 2 - *"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for BUILDING OTHERS UP ACCORDING TO THEIR NEEDS, that it may benefit those who listen." Eph. 4:29*
- 3 - *"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." Prov. 15:1*
- 4 - *"The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life." Prov. 15:4*
- 5 - *"A cheerful look gives joy to the heart, and good news gives health to the bones." Prov. 15:30*
- 6 - *"He who answers before listening, that is his folly and his shame." Prov. 18:13*
- 7 - *"What a man desires is unfailing love." Prov. 19:22*
- 8 - *"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up." I Thess. 5:11*
- 9 - *"But speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is, Christ." Eph. 4:15*
- 10 - *"Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry." James 1:19*
- 11 - *"Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice." Eph. 4:31*
- 12 - *"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." Eph. 4:32*
- 13 - *"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love." Eph. 4:2*
- 14 - *"FINALLY, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, BECAUSE TO THIS YOU WERE CALLED SO THAT YOU MAY INHERIT A BLESSING." I Peter 3:8-9*

# Understanding the Dynamics of Conflict

## *Successful Quarrelling*

Brent Hunter

Evangelist – Kirkland church of Christ

Cbhunter53@gmail.com

### Introduction:

- A. Conflict is inevitable. “A fellow who says he has never had an argument with his wife is apt to lie about other things, too.”
- B. If you have a partnership, you have to work on things together. You will have disagreements due to different backgrounds and opinions you both possess.
  - 1. Marriage is two *becoming* one and the whole time you are trying to determine which one it is!
  - 2. One fellow said, “The nice thing about being single is that all the decisions are unanimous.”
- C. This subject is vitally important because the number one criteria necessary for long term marital stability and happiness is **the ability to resolve conflict successfully!**
  - 1. The positives initially draw people together, but the negatives (and how they are handled) ultimately pull people apart.
  - 2. Research has found that there are 4 factors that if not dealt with are precursors of divorce: **CRITICISM, CONTEMPT, DEFENSIVENESS, AND WITHDRAWAL**. These are the 4 emotional land mines that will blast apart and destroy almost any marriage if they become chronic. Notice: They all deal with conflict resolution!
  - 3. This is critically important, yet so often neglected.

### I. GENERAL POINTERS

- A. Be *careful*...One zinger erases twenty positives!
  - 1. Prov 10:19 “Where there are many words, transgression is unavoidable.”
  - 2. Prov 10:20-21 “The tongue of the righteous is as choice silver, the heart of the wicked is worth little. The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of understanding.”
  - 3. Song: “Angry words, oh, let them never...” holds good advice!
  - 4. Hurtful, harsh, unkind comments can become huge withdrawals from the love bank and do serious damage to the relationship.
- B. When in doubt, *wait*.
  - 1. “He who *restrains his lips is wise*” (Prov 10:19b).
  - 2. You can always go back and say it later, but once it is out the hurt is not so easily taken back.
  - 3. One secret to a happy marriage: Let three things go every day...unsaid!
  - 4. Prov 21:23 “He who guards his mouth and this tongue, guards his soul from troubles.”
- C. Relationships have *momentum*. They have an ebb and flow to them that is either positive or negative.
  - 1. Things tend to be like a snowball rolling down hill. This works both to your advantage and disadvantage.

2. When things start to go in the wrong direction, one or both parties need to recognize it and say, “Let’s get off this negative cycle and stop hurting each other. Let’s instead apologize, put it behind us, and start doing things to show love and build each other up, instead of tear each other down!”
- D. Beware of the modern *egalitarian marriage which confuses worth with roles*.
1. People quarrel more and more today than ever before because the traditional roles have been discarded. There is **no final arbitrator of disputes**.
  2. No other organization on earth functions this way, but modern secular marriages attempt to do so. The result is that relationships often deteriorate into power plays instead of cooperative partnerships.
  3. Blurred roles and **a lack of established rules** put an untold strain on modern **American** marriages.

## II. WHAT DO MOST COUPLES ARGUE ABOUT?

- A. There are **5 traditional areas** of conflict that all couples have argued about as far back as such things have been studied.
1. Money
  2. Children (whether or when to have them and how to raise them)
  3. Sex
  4. In-laws (“What’s more important to you, your parents or me?”)
  5. Tremendous Trifles -- small, theoretically inconsequential things that drive most people to the brink of mayhem, divorce, or screaming meemies!
    - a. By definition, a trifle is something small, but it can be a tremendous source of conflict. Zech 4:10 “Despise not the day of small things.”
    - b. They are usually things one never thought about before marriage.
    - c. Examples: Dog-eared pages of a book, leaving hairs in the sink, squeezing the toothpaste “wrong”, eating styles, sleeping habits, etc.
      1. One man on his 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary calculated he had kicked the sheets loose about 7,500 times, and that this had taken him at least a minute each night.
      2. Therefore, he figured he had wasted 125 hours of his life since he had gotten married fighting with his wife over the sheets!
    - d. If the relationship already has problems, these can become the focus. However, if the relationship is solid, they are usually just irritants that will not destroy the marriage.
- B. **New top issues!**
1. Who does the domestic chores? (Women are often resentful if they have to work full-time and then pull a double-shift at home, too.)
  2. How do we spend our precious and limited leisure time?

## III. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HAPPY AND UNHAPPY COUPLES?

- A. Ironically, both happy and unhappy couples argue about the *same things*. The Number of disagreements and how often spouses disagree is not a significant factor in marital satisfaction. The difference is in *how* the parties argue.
1. Happy couples argue as if the issue is *external to the relationship*.
  2. Unhappy couples get personal and “hit below the belt” which attacks the *person* rather

than the *problem*.

- a. Learning to apply the “Ten Keys for loving and close relationships” is important.
- b. Following these guidelines will prevent harming the relationship as disagreements are worked out.

B. Mudd and Hay, two social scientists, found that even after a particular area of conflict or tremendous trifle was fixed in a marriage, it did not solve the problem..

1. The real problem was the *relationship itself*. Other surface issues were just symptoms of the relationship problems.
  2. **Serious relationship problems** were revealed such as:
    - a. Feeling lonely and unloved.
    - b. Feeling misunderstood (can’t communicate).
    - c. Losing perspective (forgetting what spouses once meant to each other).
    - d. Feeling rejected and unworthy (partner causing a self-esteem problem instead of being a support and cheerleader)!
  3. Time was wasted focusing on *peripheral issues* instead of on the *relationship*.
- C. Happy couples are very careful to not even think, much less express, either of these “**fatal thoughts**.” #1. **You don’t love me** anymore and #2. “I want a **divorce**.”

#### IV. WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENS DURING CONFLICT THAT MAKES IT SO *CRUCIAL* TO THE RELATIONSHIP?

A.. Willard Harley in **His Needs, Her Needs** explains it well when he talks about **THE THREE STAGES OF MARITAL INTIMACY**.

1. **Stage one:** You have become **INTIMATE** and feel close, so you tell each other *everything*. *Reminds me of the verbal intimacy found in the Song of Solomon*.
2. **Stage two:** You begin to have disagreements and enter into **CONFLICT**. This is not bad as long as you can *resolve the conflict so you can restore intimacy*. Couples go from stage one to stage two all the time. The key is to always return to stage one. Paul admonishes, “Let not the sun go down upon your wrath” (Eph 4:26).
3. **Stage three:** You remain in conflict and cannot resolve it. You begin to feel frustrated and misunderstood. The parties begin to hurt each other and the relationship. Emotional turmoil becomes the norm. Eventually one or both parties gives up and erect deadly walls of defense. He/she enters into **WITHDRAWAL**.

B. **The withdrawal decision...is a very serious one.** It means you have given up and decided that the way to cope with the hurt is to *emotionally disconnect* yourself from your spouse. This has far-reaching consequences!

1. You become emotionally and spiritually divorced from each other. You wake up one day and decide you “do not love him” or her anymore. The woman especially dreads physical contact because she cannot give of herself in this state.
2. The wall you have built keeps out the good as well as the bad. This explains why even thoughtful, positive things don’t mean a thing and will not be allowed as “deposits in your love bank” until you feel **SAFE** enough to let the wall down.
3. **Warning: WHEN THE OPEN SHARING OF FEELINGS STOPS, PASSION DIES!** Romantic love is lost!
4. The irony about romantic love is this: *When you have it, you think you can never lose it; and when you lose it, you think you can never regain it.* Both are untrue and naïve!



- A Romantic love *can be regained* if the parties understand what has happened to them. **Learning how to resolve conflict** will let both parties feel **SAFE** enough to share feelings so the walls can come down.
- b. Trust is re-established and over time the old feelings of **intimacy and romance return!!**
  - c. The key to **preventing affairs** is to commit to full disclosure about hard topics. Affairs happen when walls (secrets) are created between spouses and windows of intimacy with someone else. Deep sharing on a feeling level is what causes someone to fall in love.
  - d. However, if there is **nothing important your spouse doesn't know** about, an affair will almost never happen.

### **Conclusion:**

- A. If you stay in stage one (intimacy) and learn how to avoid stage three (withdrawal), you will remain happily married!
- B. To avoid the wall, learn how to resolve conflict constructively. Have courage to not avoid tough topics to begin with. If a wall is already up, bravely go back and work through the conflict in order to regain the intimacy you both desire.
- C. In order to accomplish this, you need guidelines and rules to follow so that you feel safe. That is the reason for and the importance of the next lesson on “Rules for Fighting Fairly”.
- D. Following these principles from the start can prevent a wall from forming and keep the marriage strong. However, if the wall has been there for years, and bitterness and anonymity have crept in, then a third party counselor is necessary to help you work through it!
- E. It is painful and a bit scary, but it is **well worth it**. After a couple comes through the crisis, they are often better off and closer than they have ever been before! Just like with a bone that breaks. Nature heals it back stronger than it was before the break.
- F. When folks tell you it's no use and that their love is “dead”, give them HOPE. Remind them that we serve a God who specializes in the *resurrection from the dead!*

## SYMPTOMS OF SPIRITUAL DIVORCE

Symptoms of **spiritual divorce** are indicators that a separation is *developing* and needs to be confronted through dialogue. These are “*signs*” and are present at some time in every marriage. **Take about 20 minutes apiece for each to privately do this exercise then exchange your answers and discuss together.** Don’t allow fear to prevent you from being open with each other.

### Instructions:

- **Read through all the symptoms.** Which symptoms are currently present in your marriage? Place a check mark next to each one.
- Re-read those that are checked. Select **2 or 3 you feel most strongly about** right now.
- **Write and describe your feelings** about those 2 or 3. If time allows, continue on to the others checked.

1. Prolonged **moods of sadness** in our marriage and in the family
2. Feelings of **disillusionment, boredom, and emptiness**
3. **Dissatisfaction**
4. **Indifference** to each other’s problems
5. Occasions of **coldness** in our relationship
6. **Avoiding or refusing sexual relationship**
7. No interest in things of the other – **lack of sensitivity**
8. Lack of **kindness, tenderness, and small courtesies**
9. **Failure to take time to think deeply**
10. Feelings of **insecurity** and **mutual distrust**
11. **More confidence in a third person** other than with each other
12. Lack of **dialogue** and **intimate communication**
13. Most **communication mechanical, routine, and surface**
14. Feelings of **being alone** and **not understood**
15. Frequent **bad humor** and **tension**
16. Feeling **used**
17. Frequent **quarrels:** in private, or in front of children or others
18. **Ridicule** of each other
19. **Superficial life** and **continuous escapes**, together or alone, such as liquor, drugs, TV, compulsive socializing
20. Attitude of **selfishness**
21. **Insults, rude words, and sarcasm**
22. **Avoidance of situations that deeply need attention**
23. Personal **relationship with God causing conflict**
24. Lack of **appreciation**
25. Lack or **loss of a sense of wonder**
26. Lack of **faith in love and marriage**
27. **Insensitive teasing**
28. **Nagging**

## THE MARRIAGE CREED

- **COMFORT EACH OTHER...**Provide a refuge and sanctuary for each other from the chill winds of the world. Your marriage is a hearth, from whence comes the peace, harmony, and warmth of soul and spirit.
- **CARESS AS YOU WOULD BE CARESSED...**Warm your loved one's body with your healing touch. Remember that as babies can die with lack of touching, so marriages can wither from lack of closeness.
- **BE A FRIEND AND PARTNER...**Friendship can be a peaceful island, separate and apart, in a world of turmoil and strife. Reflect upon the tranquility of the many future years you can share with a true friend and beware of becoming battling enemies under the same roof.
- **BE OPEN WITH ONE ANOTHER...**Bind not yourselves in the secretness that causes suspicion and doubt. Trust and reveal yourselves to each other, even as the budding rose opens to reveal its fragrance and beauty. **REALLY LISTEN...**and hear not only words, but also the non-language of tone, mood, and expression. Learn to listen in order to understand rather than listening to argue.
- **RESPECT EACH OTHER'S RIGHTS...**Remember that each is a person of flesh and blood, entitled to his or her own choices and mistakes. Each owns himself and has the right to equality.
- **ALLOW FOR INDIVIDUALITY...**Seek not to create for each other a new mold that can only fit with much discomfort and pain. Accept the other as he or she is, just as you would have yourself accepted.
- **GIVE MUTUAL APPROVAL...**Remember, criticism divides while compliments encourage confidence in the other. Hasten not to point out the other's mistakes, for each will soon discover his own.
- **CHERISH YOUR UNION...**Let no one come between your togetherness...not child, not friend, not worldly goods. Yet maintain enough separateness to allow each other his or her own uniqueness.
- **LOVE ONE ANOTHER...**Love is your *river of life*---your eternal source of re-creating yourselves. Above all else---love one another.