



Welcome back to the Great Date Night!

We're on our fourth month of fun dates, and great conversations, and we've got two more to go after this! We've even included some additional worksheets in case you and your spouse want to keep the discussion going in-between great dates!

As usual, take advantage of our inexpensive childcare if you have small children, you can register and choose your childcare time and location online at www.capechristian.com/greatdates

Please print the discussion guide on the next page and take it with you on your date. You can go out to dinner, find a shady spot at the park, or just stay in for a night of homemade dessert and some alone time. Wherever you go, you can use the following page as your evening's conversational guide.

Oh yeah, and don't forget to post pictures and like/share the church's facebook page at www.facebook.com/capechristian

Have a Great Date!

Fighting For Relationship Pt. 2

You may not have a boxing ring or a marriage referee in your house, but chances are you do have your fair share of conflicts. Most couples don't have a problem getting into arguments, but they do have difficulty resolving their disagreements and coming out stronger on the other side. Conflict was designed by God to refine us, but all too often we fight against our spouse rather than fighting together for a better outcome and a stronger relationship.

Use this discussion guide to navigate these issues on your date tonight. Follow Up This Discussion in the weeks to come with the "Fighting Fair In Marriage" worksheets on the following pages.

Review: Go back to last month's discussion about how to develop a "PEACE plan" – Remember PEACE? It stands

Pause

Empathize

Avoid Generalizations

Confess Your Part

Engage Gently

If you didn't use the discussion guide from last month you can access it at www.capechristian.com/dates

Discuss: Think of a time in the past month when you've intentionally used the PEACE plan during a conflict. How did it work out? In what ways was it challenging and in what ways did it strengthen your marriage?

Discuss: Which part of the PEACE plan is the hardest for you to follow? Why do you think that is? What do you think you can do to improve in this area?

Wrap Up: Remember, conflict isn't bad in and of itself. In fact, when handled correctly, conflict can actually strengthen a relationship and bring a couple closer together. The determining factor often boils down to whether we're fighting for a better relationship or fighting to win an argument! Use the remaining worksheets along with your notes from last month to develop a better plan for handling conflict in marriage.

Work Sheets: The following sheets are a continuation of the worksheets from March's Date Night. Please use these over the next few weeks to follow up your discussion from tonight's date! If you do not have the previous worksheets from earlier in the year you can access them any time at www.capechristian.com/dates

Avoid generalizations:

Two things happen with unresolved anger: it grows and we lose sight of it. When an argument is left alone but unresolved, a future trigger will return you to the point where you left off, not ground zero.

Your tendency will be to generalize the problem by naming your spouses' character defects and recounting a version of history that supports your claim. Avoid pulling out the laundry list of past sins.

Discuss: Take a moment to honestly evaluate whether you and your spouse give specific feedback in conflict, or whether you generalize and leave things unresolved.

Confess your part:

"Love covers a multitude of sins."

1 Peter 4:8

"If you forgive others, your Heavenly Father will forgive you."

Mathew 6:14

"Kindness affects more than severity."

Aesop

If you're going to fly, you have to know how to land the plane. The same holds true for resolving conflict well. You have to know how to end it well by offering repair attempts.

There are four key concepts for repair attempts:

1. Offer timely concessions.

("You're right," "That's true," "I see your point.")

2. Know when to call "timeout", taking a short window of time

(no longer than 24 hours ideally to sort out your thoughts and feelings before continuing).

3. Reverse downward spirals with unexpected grace.

4. Well placed, self-deprecating humor (rather than belittling) can provide some much needed levity in tense situations.

*Go through each part of confessing your part and assign your marriage a color. Green means you are doing well in this area, yellow means you are doing o.k. but need to work on it, and red means it is an area that is in major need of improvement.
Explaining your answers in the space provided below.*

Confessing when wrong:

Color_____

Explanation_____

Offer timely concessions:

Color_____

Explanation_____

Know when to call a "Timeout"

Color_____

Explanation_____

Reverse downward spirals with unexpected grace

Color_____

Explanation_____

Well placed, self-deprecating humor

Color _____

Explanation _____

Engage gently:

Pick the right place and time to resolve conflict.

Commit to doing it in person (not online or on phone).

Think though opening remarks. (How a conversation starts can easily predict how it will end.)

Discuss these three areas of engagement and develop a gameplan to implement them in your marriage.

Listening well. 4 parts of active listening-

- Waiting (don't interrupt)
- Attending (focus on what they're saying rather than your response)
- Clarifying (who, what, where, when, why)
- Agreeing (establish common ground)
- Give the benefit of doubt whenever possible.

Discussion:

How were emotions handled in your family?

How were conflicts resolved?

What are the main unresolved issues that keep popping up in your marriage?

Finish this statement, "I can do a better job in handling conflict by..."

Ask your spouse, "how can I better engage you on sensitive topics?" "How do I hurt you when I'm angry?"

Take turns asking for and receiving forgiveness wherever it's necessary. Be specific and follow a confession with, "I forgive you."

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

The Twenty-One Day Love Challenge

For 21 consecutive days, read 1 Corinthians 13 first thing in the morning and pray, “God, help these come alive in me today, especially when it’s most difficult.” Ask God to fill you to an overflowing measure with his love.

Ask for God’s help to see your spouse and those people you’re struggling with the most as He sees them. At the end of each day, take the passage back out and pray a prayer of self-examination. “God, where were these traits alive in me today?” “Where were they not?”

1 Corinthians 13: 4-8, 11

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ⁸ Love never fails. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.

Love Philanthropy:

A Philanthropist is someone that makes a great deal of money in one arena and chooses to give a portion of it to another arena. One is the source of the money, the other is the recipient.

God is the source of our love, not our marriage. Our spouse is a recipient of our love. If we look primarily to our spouse as the source of our love, we will never be able to love without being loved back.

When God’s love becomes the rule of your life, you will be able to eliminate all the fine print that we tend to attach to 1 Cor. 13 that qualify our love based on merit and our instincts, past, and mood.

We cannot love without first receiving love. But we can love without receiving love from our spouse. Our source of love is God. This is why one person is usually able to transform a marriage.

The Marriage Covenant

God’s love for us is based on who He is, not who we are. Marriage is a reflection of the covenant love of God. Please use the following Marriage Covenant as a symbol of your commitment to each other to live out this kind of Covenant love going forward.