

## Conflict Resolution / Fighting Spiritual Battles

**Tammy:** Do *you* handle conflict well. Often I want to run away from it and avoid it, and hope it will just go away. But I've found that doesn't really solve the problem. What do you think?

Hi, I'm Tammy. Welcome to Women of Hope, and thank you for being with us today. Carol, what do you think?

**Carol:** Well, I know some people *like* arguing, especially if they are powerful and can get their own way. But most of us women don't like it. We have that in common, Tammy. I usually become very frightened and feel like a little child. My stomach feels sick and my heart races whenever I have to talk with someone who is angry with me, or if I feel they have done something wrong and I need to talk to them about it.

**Tammy:** Do you feel the same way with your husband and your children?

**Carol:** Not really, I find it much easier with my family. I don't get quite as nervous when I have to deal with conflict with them.

**Tammy:** Me too. I think this is probably because we live together and I know we love each other. But I still struggle sometimes when I have to deal with anger, disagreement or conflict in my family.

**Carol:** You know, it's really easy to feel angry. Maybe – too easy.

**Tammy:** Yes, it sure is.

**Carol:** I struggle with that. I think a lot of people do. Even with our own families, our husbands and our children or friends. But there are ways we can learn how to get the conflict resolved in a way that makes the relationship even better than it was before the fight began. Can you believe that? Our friend, Sandy, is with us today with some ideas to help us to deal with conflict. Welcome, Sandi.

**Sandi :** Thank you Carol. Hi Tammy, and hello to *you* too. Let me tell you a story from when I was a child. I did something to annoy my sister. So she scratched me with her long fingernails. I was angry,

and I lifted my hand above my head. I was going to give her a strong, hard slap. My father had quietly come up behind me just then. He grabbed my arm. I was so upset. I could not get even with my sister. Was our conflict resolved?

**Tammy:** I guess not. The fight was stopped, but those feelings were still there and you weren't friends again.

**Sandi :** You're right! Conflicts happen for many reasons. Conflicts are *normal* in close relationships, like families and friends. We might imagine that other families are always sweet and loving, but I don't think there is any close relationship without some conflict, because people are different!

**Carol:** That's true. Each of us may try to resolve conflicts in different ways. We are all different. We come from different backgrounds. We have different experiences in life.

**Sandi :** Do we have to agree on everything? No. We can decide to accept one another even when there are differences. That is one way to take the pain out of conflict. We can also decide it is all right to not agree on everything.

Communication – talking things through – is very important. It can really help to reduce conflict. When we talk we should be open, honest, and ready to listen. Try not to accuse the other person. Do not blame them for the conflict; there are two people involved. We need to let both people share what they are thinking . . . their reasons. . . their hurts. . . their expectations.

Before I try to fix a conflict with someone else, I need to take a look at myself. Do I need to change something before I speak to the other person? Do I need to apologize? Have I thought of some solutions? Am I willing to forgive him, or her, even if he, or she does not ask for forgiveness?

Are you an angry sort of person? I suggest you don't try to solve a conflict when you are angry or emotional. Say that you will come back and talk later, and walk away for an hour. That way, you won't say things that later you might be sorry you said.

**Tammy:** Yes, I've learned not to raise a difficult issue when either of us is tired, or hungry. These things effect your emotions and thinking. When you confront someone about a conflict you need to pick a good time.

**Sandi:** Good advice Tammy. Here's another important point. *Listen* to the other person carefully. Repeat what they said in your own words, to make sure you understand what they mean, and show you are trying to understand.

Only deal with the present. The things that are happening today. Do not bring up issues from the past. And it's good to remember that our relationship with the other person is usually more important than the issue causing the conflict. If you care about the person you can usually find a way to sort out the problem.

**Carol:** What happened with your sister, Sandi?

**Sandi:** Well, we stayed angry for a little while, and we often argued in those years. We were just immature children, but we really did care about each other and we are best friends now.

**Carol:** I was thinking, Tammy, it might be a good idea if you went over some of those points that Sandi made. That would help us to remember what we need to do to help resolve conflict.

**Tammy:** Good idea. The first thing I remember was: Conflicts are normal in close relationships.

**Carol:** It is so nice to know that I am not the only one who has to deal with conflicts.

**Tammy:** I know you're right about that! Then she said: we can decide to accept one another even when there are differences. And the third point- communication is very important...talking things through.

**Carol:** And she said I really should take a look at myself. I am not so good at that one. I would rather look at the other person.

**Tammy:** I know, but it's good to realise it might be partly your fault! The next one is very important - do not try to resolve it while you are angry.

**Carol:** The next one I need to remember is this - listen to the other person carefully, and make sure you understand their point of view. That is a hard one, isn't it?

**Tammy:** Yes, it is. The last one I think is even harder - only deal with things in the present. Do not bring up issues from the past. I believe these things will help you my friend. I know they will help us.

**Carol:** Yes, I think they will.

**Tammy:** We've been talking with Sandi about ways to deal with conflict, and now she has some thoughts from God's word the Bible about fighting spiritual battles.

**Sandi:** I shared some good ideas about dealing with conflict, but I have to tell you, I'm not always good at it. I'm not proud of this, and I had a major disagreement with a group of women recently. We had different ideas about how to do something, and I just KNEW I was right and they were wrong! So I put on my "battle clothes," so to speak – my emotional armour that would protect me – and I went to war. An armour protects our whole body, so, it was as though I put on the "belt of unpleasantness" that would hurt my friends. It felt like I put the "breastplate of disagreement" around my chest and I argued with all my might. I reached down and on my feet I put the "shoes of discontentment" and I complained. On my head I put my "helmet of stubbornness" and would not listen or compromise. To protect myself from the attacks of others, I took up the "shield of anger" and I yelled so that everyone heard my opinion. I fought a great and mighty battle. Did I win? No, I did not win.

I was fighting the wrong battle, and I had on the wrong sort of armor. What armor had I put on to prepare for battle? The armor of sin. What is the armor of sin? It is unpleasantness, disagreement, discontentment, stubbornness and anger. I fought a battle in my own power – with my own words – and I failed completely to win the hearts of the women I was fighting.

What does the Bible say about going into battle when we have disagreements? I need to tell you a true story first.

Paul was a leader of the early followers of Jesus, and he preached the good news about Jesus Christ in a city called Ephesus, in Turkey. Some believed and put their trust in Jesus, and they met together to worship God and support each other. Some were from Jewish backgrounds, some were Gentiles who used to worship other gods. Some were slaves, some were masters. So you can imagine they sometimes didn't agree with each other. Paul really loved this young church community.

Paul often got into trouble with the Jewish leaders because of his preaching, and he was beaten and arrested more than once. Some time later, Paul was in prison in Rome. He was guarded by Roman soldiers and he saw their uniform every day. A soldier wore armour when he fought; there was a strong leather belt, and a breastplate to protect his chest. He wore special shoes, and carried a small shield that he used to stop arrows. On his head he would have a helmet made of metal and leather, and he carried a sword to defend himself and to attack the enemy. He was a proud and fearsome figure!

While Paul was in that prison, he wrote a letter to the Christians in Ephesus, and that letter was inspired by God. Now it is part of God's word, the Bible. A lot of his letter is about how God had made them united in their faith in Jesus Christ, and how they should work hard to stay united ( Eph 4:1-6) He told them to be honest with each other (4:25), thankful, worshipping God together as one (4:19-20). He said they needed to submit to each other, not try to dominate each other (5:21-29) Now listen to the next thing he wrote.

“Be strong in union with the Lord and by means of *his* mighty power. Put on the whole armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the Devil's evil tricks. For your struggle is not against flesh and blood, that is, other people, but against the forces of darkness and spiritual wickedness.” (Eph 6:10-12)

Now, I know YOU have had disagreements and arguments with people! We ALL have, haven't we? When we get into fights we protect ourselves by acting in a hurtful way and saying hurtful words. We are in a battle and the goal is to WIN. But who are we fighting? We are fighting other people - perhaps it is a husband, a mother-in-law, a friend, a neighbor, or even a sister at church. The devil, Satan, will use people and circumstances to make us angry so that we are cruel to others.

I was doing battle with those women, when the real enemy was the devil. The devil is the source of all evil. He is the father of lies, anger, resentment, envy and darkness. He is the enemy of our souls and he is the one who causes us to go into battle with the wrong armor. I was trying to fight about worthless rules when the real reason for the battle was EVIL. I lost the battle because I not only chose the wrong enemy, I also was not properly prepared with God's armor.

The Bible not only tells us WHO we should fight, it tells us HOW to fight. God is the father of all that is good. Through Paul, God told us in the letter to the Ephesians chapter 6 to stand up for what is

good. He wrote, “Take your stand with TRUTH as your belt and RIGHTEOUSNESS as your breastplate. Put the good news of PEACE on your feet and use SALVATION as your helmet. In your hand hold the sword of the SPIRIT which is the Word of God. Above all, take FAITH as your shield.” Oh – this is different from the armour I put on before!

What is the Bible telling us? Before we do battle in any situation we are to make sure we are being truthful not only in what we say and do, but also in what we believe. Are you fighting for something that stands for truth as we know it in the Bible? If so, wear it with confidence, like a belt. Then we are to put on the breastplate of righteousness– that means being holy and good. This will protect our hearts. Next come the shoes of peace which will help us walk calmly, quietly and gently, as we carry God’s message of peace. On your head put on the helmet of salvation; you do that by being prepared to restore, rescue and heal hurting people, because God has restored, rescued and healed you. In your heart carry the sword the Holy Spirit gives us, which is another way of saying God’s word, the Bible. The Bible is TRUTH. It is God’s own words, not *my* own words. If you go into battle with the Bible guiding you in all that you do and say your battle will be successful. Psalm 119:11 says “If we hide God’s word in our heart, we will not sin against Him.”

Lastly, take FAITH as your shield. What do you believe in? Is it “yourself” or perhaps your “right” to defend yourself. If it is, you will fail. The Bible says your shield of Faith must be made up of two things. The first is *confidence* - that God is in control of everything. The second is *hope* - NOT in what you SEE, but in what you know to be true from the Bible. Paul ends his letter by saying we should “pray at all times and be alert, tireless, and brave.”

The next time you are tempted to do battle with your husband, your mother-in-law, a friend, a neighbor, or even a sister at church, stop for a minute and ask yourself ; who am I really fighting- my husband, my mother-in-law, or the devil, Satan, who wants to destroy marriages? Am I fighting my friend, or Satan who wants to break up friendships?

And ask yourself; am I *prepared* for this spiritual battle? This morning, did I ask God to show me his truth, to protect me with his righteousness, to build up my faith, to help me to work for peace? Have I prepared myself by filling my mind with the truth from God’s word? If you do these things, I think you’ll find you don’t want to fight people, you will want to help them and be at peace with them.

Let me pray for you now.

*Dear Lord,*

*It is so easy to fight with other people. It is the devil we should be fighting. Help my friend to be prepared for this battle by giving her truth from your Word. Bless her with your righteousness, peace, salvation, and faith.*

**Carol:** Thank you for that story. Sandi. Conflict, fighting, stress; everyone has it and everyone hates it. But even in the midst of the raging battle, remember, that the true enemy is Satan, the devil. It's ok to be angry with Satan! But always remember, we have the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Tammy:** That's right. I really love the song, *Be Thou My Vision*. Every time I hear it, it reminds me that the Lord is my vision, my battleshield, my sword for the fight. It makes me feel strong- not because I am strong, but because I'm trusting in God who is strong and good and who loves me. He loves you too, my friend.

**Carol:** It's time for us to go now, but we'll be praying for you. We'd love to hear from you, so please write to us at TWR Women of Hope and share your story with us so we can pray for you. Our email address is [TWRWomenofHope@twr.org](mailto:TWRWomenofHope@twr.org). That's [TWRWomenofHope@twr.org](mailto:TWRWomenofHope@twr.org)

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[TWRWomenofHope.org](http://TWRWomenofHope.org). That's [TWRWomenofHope.org](http://TWRWomenofHope.org). Or you can visit our Facebook page.

**Tammy:** As we go, let me just say those words from the Bible again.

"Be strong in union with the Lord and by means of *his* mighty power. Put on the armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the Devil's evil tricks."

Goodbye, and God bless you.

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