

# THE MAN IN THE MIRROR A LOOK IN THE MIRROR

An equipping e-newsletter from Man in the Mirror to help you reach more men.



## Resolving Conflict

By Patrick Morley and David Delk

Trouble viewing this email?

[Click Here](#)

Excerpted and adapted from *The Marriage Prayer* (Moody Press, Fall 2008)

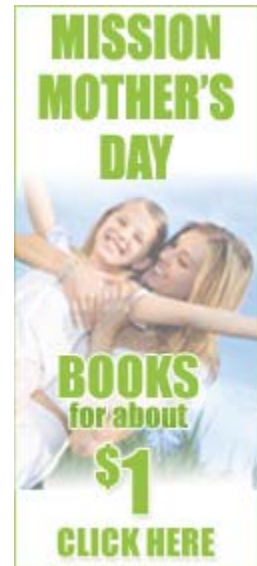
If you're married, you have conflict. It's inevitable when you bind two sinful people together that there will be tension and friction. How you handle conflict says a lot about where your heart is with Christ.

### Why Conflict in Marriage Hurts So Much

Since we truly have become one flesh, there is a vulnerability in marriage unlike any other relationship. Whether we admit it or not, we care deeply what our spouse thinks about us. We desperately want to be admired, cherished, respected, and valued. When we experience conflict and criticism, it strikes directly at this desire—we are forced to admit our failings and faults. Not only this, but most of us are considerably more sensitive than we want to let on. When we get our feelings hurt at work or by a friend, we have to control ourselves so we don't let it show. We look like we have crocodile skin. But the reality is that often we are faking it. Those things that people say to us matter. Rejections, slights, and rude comments really do hurt.

Most of us tend to bring 100% of our sensitivity into 20% of our relationships. These are the relationships where we feel comfortable expressing our frustration or hurt feelings. We accumulate all the little pent up slights we get all day, perceived or real. Since we won't honestly deal with the people who caused the issues, we bring 100% of our sensitivity home with us. So the slights or criticisms we experience at home get blown all out of proportion. The next time you react to something your spouse says, take a deep breath and consider what all might lie beneath your emotional reaction.

We really are a lot more sensitive than we would ever admit.



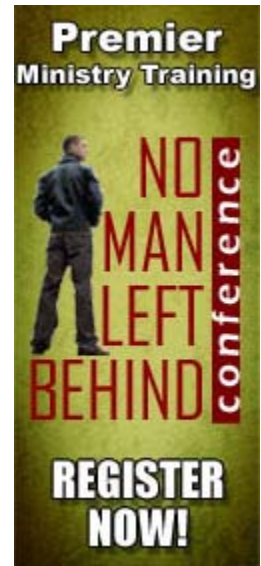
## Resolving Conflict

One essential thing we've found from experience: if you want to have great relationships, honest communication has to be at the foundation of it all. Too often in relationships there is a lack of frankness. We decide what to say based on what we think the other person wants to hear. We try to say everything so carefully because we are trying to manage the other person's response.

Don't get us wrong. We should be sensitive and thoughtful in the way we speak to our spouses. But many of us cross a line where we are not expressing the whole truth because we are afraid of how our spouse will react. When this becomes a habit you have no real way of dealing with conflict.

Learn to speak the truth in love and let God determine the results. Speak with gentleness, humility, and a genuine desire for the other person's best interest. One

practical way to foster honest communication—don't focus on your spouse's behavior, instead express how you are impacted as a result of their behavior.



You also foster honest communication when you think ahead and don't have to reinvent how to handle conflict every time it occurs. Make an actual plan for how you will bring up and handle conflicts. Here are a few suggestions (mark beside each if you want to actually try to implement it):

Him Her

- Set up a time once a week when you can bring up any issues outside the heat of the moment. Have the meeting whether or not there are any issues to discuss, so the habit will be in place when there is a problem.
- You might want to raise an issue by writing down your perceptions and feelings—make that part of the system. It's easier to carefully state your perspective when you take the time to actually write it down. Then give your spouse a few minutes to read the letter and think about their response before you have your conversation.
- As soon as a conflict begins, go to a specific place in your home to discuss things calmly and privately. Your friends and children don't need to see you sounding off at one another in a public setting. (Your kids will know something is up, so it's a good thing to loop back with them and explain the conflict and your resolution. They need to see you own up to mistakes and also that your love for one another is bigger than any temporary issue.)
- Make the commitment together now—the next time conflict begins, you'll pray the Marriage Prayer aloud together before you talk about resolving the issues.

The secret of functional families is honest, open communication especially when it comes to conflict resolution. Remember, nobody can make you unhappy unless you give them permission. Having honest communication is one way of denying permission to someone else to make you unhappy.



When we make our spouse our top priority (after God), we will still have conflict, but now we have a full emotional bank account and the reserves to handle conflict well.

Here's a phrase from the Marriage Prayer that summarizes this teaching—"Lord, help me love You more than her, and her more than anyone or anything else." When we love God and our spouse more than ourselves, we see conflict as a chance to reflect and repent. Handled biblically, conflict can become an opportunity to make your marriage better than it has ever been before.

### The Marriage Prayer

Father,  
I said, "Til death do us part"—I want to mean it.  
Help me love You more than her,  
and her more than anyone or anything else.  
Help me bring her into Your presence today.  
Make us one, like You are three-in-one.  
I want to hear her, cherish her, and serve her—  
So she would love You more and we can bring You glory.  
Amen



### Patrick Morley and David Delk

Pat is the CEO of Man in the Mirror. He and Patsy have been married for 35 years. David Delk is the President of Man in the Mirror and has been married to Ruthie for 20 years. Their soon-to-be released book, *The Marriage Prayer* (Moody), brings biblical insights to life through true stories of real couples.



---

© 2008. Patrick Morley. All rights reserved. This article may be reproduced for non-commercial ministry purposes with proper attribution.

---

Get a printed version of [A Look in the Mirror](#) and more in [Equipping the Man in the Mirror](#), a bi-monthly daily devotional for leaders.

CAN-SPAM ACT of 2003 Compliant. This e-mail has been sent as a service to individuals or churches who have requested information from Man in the Mirror. We enjoy sharing with you the latest in Men's Ministry news, resources, and services. [Click Here](#) to learn more about the Man in the Mirror email lists.

