



Fighting Fair In Marriage

(ie., Talking points for weathering “Intense Fellowship”)

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Scriptures are printed verbatim with references noted but highlights and underlines are added. Quotes and all primary sources are footnoted.

A. How not to “fight fair” in marriage.

1. When you are dishonest.
2. When you hold on to things from the past without processing them.
3. When you personally attack your spouse.
4. You when fail to meet the primary needs in your mates life.
5. When you fail to keep your word following a fight.
6. When you become harsh and seek to win a fight at all cost.
7. When you become sarcastic, hurtful (yelling, cussing), or harsh in your communication style.
(NEVER allow a fight to become *emotionally or physically abusive—it is totally unacceptable!*)
8. When you fight in front of other family members, kids, neighbors—anywhere in public.
9. When you choose not to resolve an ongoing issue.
10. When you enter a fight having not prayed for your mate. (You are supposed to be on the same team!)

B. Before you fight, remember these truths.

1. Understand that fighting is usually the results of “unmet needs” in your spouse (or marriage).
2. “It’s never about *being right*—it’s about DOING *what’s right*.”
3. Seldom do couples fight about what is truly *germane*—get to the root issue as soon as possible.
4. Attack the issue—not each other.
5. Work on only one issue at a time.
6. Think before you talk. (Check your motivation, attitude, and hurt level; be ready to listen, etc.)
7. Make sure you have a safe place for fighting.
8. Confront to heal—not win. “If two people get in a fight and one person wins—they both lose.” - JKT
9. Remember the goal: ***God-honoring Resolution!***
10. “If your spouse says you do/are something, you probably do/are.” (Don’t personalize it; hear them out.)
11. Eliminate the following words/phrases: “You never...” “You always...” “I can’t...” “I won’t...” “You...”

It takes two healthy people, who are in a healthy place, to fight in a healthy manner.” - JKT

C. Scriptures to consider (just a few, of many)

Proverbs 11:12, ESV -¹² *Whoever belittles his (mate) lacks sense, but a man (ie., person) of understanding remains silent.*

Proverbs 29:11, NASB95 -¹¹ *A fool always loses his temper, But a wise man (ie., person) holds it back.*

Proverbs 15:18, NASB95 -¹⁸ *A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, But the slow to anger calms a dispute.*

Ephesians 4:26, NASB95 -²⁶ *BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger....*

D. "Talking Points" for Fighting Fair

1. Ask your mate if they feel up to "resolving a conflict" at this time. (Get to it soon, if not.)
2. Begin with prayer. (It sets the pace for truly resolving the conflict in a way that honors God. Both husband and wife should pray.)
3. Clearly and precisely define the issue to be resolved.
4. Explain your part in the problem. (Begin by focusing on *you*, not *them*.)
5. State exactly what is bothering you. (Be clear, precise and kind.)
6. Give equal time for response—don't interrupt.
7. Touch each other the whole time. (Practice good communication skills—especially *attunement*.)
8. Be honest with how a matter makes you feel but keep it under control.
9. Remember the strength of a good apology offered sincerely.
10. Develop a good "game plan" coming out of the resolution meeting.
11. If things seem to be getting out of control, have a "time out" (go cool off). "Time in" soon but not until you are truly ready to resolve a matter. (Some non-athletic folks call this a "pause.")
12. Remember to "meet needs" and "celebrate" following a resolution meeting.

E. Additional Thoughts

1. If you can't fight fair, consider not fighting until you get a third party to help you.
2. It's not the right time to fight if you feel overly hurt, overly angry, overly critical, tired, and/or hungry.
3. Never use the "D Word" when fighting—never.
4. Resolving conflict will require both of you to be *forgiving*—you're never more like Jesus than when you forgive. Be willing to compromise.
5. Most of the time, your mate just wants to be *heard*. Truly seek to hear the other person out. Connection is sometime more important than just resolving a conflict.