

## Week 5

The Facilitator Guide will help you lead the conversation. [Brackets] indicate simple cues for you, as the facilitator, not intended to be read aloud.

### Conversation Starter:

Describe a time you experienced a gap between an expectation and your experience. (Hint: It could have been a menu item you ordered at a restaurant, a vacation that didn't go as planned, a new purchase that didn't deliver, etc.)

[Play the Recap Video, then move on to the Discussion Questions]

### Discussion Questions:

**Question 1:** What is the silliest thing you have ever fought over with your spouse or another family member? Would you describe yourself as conflict oriented or conflict averse?

**Question 2:** In the message, Jason shared that “most people believe that conflict is the issue in our relationships and if we were only to get rid of it, we’d all be better off.” Why is this a relational myth? What value can conflict provide in our relationships with others? (Hint: Les and Leslie Parrot remind us that “Conflict is the price we pay for deepening intimacy”).

- **Read James 1:19-20**

**Question 3:** James lays out two critical components for fighting fair: “Be quick to listen and slow to speak.” While these instructions are simple, they aren’t necessarily easy. In the midst of an argument, which one is most difficult for you and why?

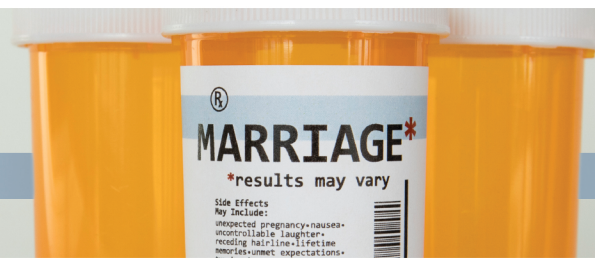
**Question 4:** In the heat of the moment most of us tap into our natural defense mechanisms for conflict resolution:

- *Criticism:* attacking the person, not the problem
- *Contempt:* how we say something either through words or body language.
- *Stonewalling:* disengagement that causes us to bottle our emotions up.

How can each of these responses hurt our relationships rather than keep us in sync with God and those we love?

### Pray:

Tonight, our application is prayer. Let’s split up in twos. Spend a few minutes discussing which defense mechanism is your default. Pray for another to be able to recognize the ways we fall short and to respond in a way that honors God and our relationships. Let’s pray that we would fight for resolution rather than victory.



## Bonus: (For Married Couples)

Every couple fights, not every couple fights fair! This week find some time with your spouse to discuss some ways you can seek resolution over your desire to be right. Don't waste or minimize your conflict. Learn from it so that you can gain greater intimacy and understanding of one another.

### 1. Be slow to speak.

- **Establish a cooling-off period.** Agree on some ground rules that permit either partner to “cool off” before trying to resolve anger. It may be necessary to walk or engage in some other physical activity to allow anger to dissipate. Such a period can allow a spouse to identify the issue more clearly and organize his or her thoughts, thus keeping the fight more in focus.
- Never **raise** your voice.
- **Avoid** saying **always** and **never**.

### 2. Be quick to listen.

- **Stop** everything you are doing
- **Look** with your entire body.
- **Listen** to every word your spouse says, and then use your active listening skills.

### 3. Fight Fair.

- **State the issue honestly and openly.** Don't say, “I'm hurt by the way you don't show me respect.” Rather, be clear and specific as in, “I felt hurt when you said...or when your tone of voice sounds condescending toward me.”
- **Don't hit below the belt.** Everyone has vulnerable areas. Don't use your intimate knowledge of your partner's weaknesses and sensitivities to hurt him/her.
- **Fight by mutual consent.** Don't insist on a fight when your spouse is tired or unable to handle the strain. A fair fight requires two ready participants.

**Take steps to fight fair with your spouse this week by reading and talking over the following Bible passages.**

**Day 1:** Proverbs 18:1-13

**Day 2:** James 3:1-12

**Day 3:** James 1:19-27

**Day 4:** Ephesians 5:21-33

**Day 5:** Ephesians 4:25-32

**Day 6:** Romans 12:9-21

**Day 7:** Matthew 18:21-35