

## Should Spouses Argue?

It seems to be commonly accepted that all spouses argue and have fights, even Christians. But is it true? I say no, with my wife and I as examples. After having been married over 43 years, we have never once fought, nor can either of us remember arguing. This does NOT mean that we always agree, or that we have never allowed emotions to become aroused, or that we have never had to apologize to one another. Nor does it mean that we do not need better communication, nor even that we have never argued with the children. We freely admit that we have need of improvement in many areas of marriage and parenting, but we have never considered arguing and fighting to be the way to handle differences between us. **Differences are inevitable, but arguing and fighting need not be so.**

The opening premise of the arguers is "All spouses fight and argue". From this they conclude,

1. "If someone denies that they argue, they are lying, or hiding." *Sounds like Job's friends.*
2. "Or, it could mean that one or both of them are suppressing their feelings, and are spineless, allowing themselves to be 'doormats'. " They would liken such a marriage to a master-slave relationship.
3. "If children say their parents do not fight, then either they are lying, or the parents just do their fighting in private." *Do you realize how horrible that is to say? "Johnnie, you just THINK your parents don't fight. They really do and are just hiding it from you."*
4. "Since everybody does it, it is in some way excusable." *How convenient. Would you say the same about other sins? Just whose standard are you comparing yourself to?*
5. "Some would go on to say that it is not just unavoidable, but a good thing, because it encourages 'communication'." *But not all communication is good. Many things really are better left unsaid. Also, this sounds perilously close to "Let us do evil, that good may come." (Rom. 3:8) Or, "Let me smash my thumb with a hammer, because it feels so good when it stops hurting."*

The last two conclusions I would categorically deny. The first three are sometimes, or even often true, but they are based on a false premise. The plain fact is that not all Christians, and maybe not even all non-Christians, do fight and argue.

### What Do We Mean by Arguing?

Now I could wish that this was all merely a difference in what we mean by arguing. In a general sense, I am arguing right now, by presenting various arguments to support my viewpoint. This kind of arguing can be dispassionate and consists of presenting a premise, supporting it by various arguments, countering possible objections, and trying to come to a reasonable conclusion. This kind of argument is more like "Come, let us reason together."

We also remember that Jesus said that lust in the heart is to be guilty of adultery, and to hate your brother is as murder. Now in that sense I can see that no one could be totally innocent of arguing and strife.

I cannot help but think though, that when people talk about arguing with their spouses, they don't mean logical and calm reasoning, nor merely striving and argumentative thoughts, but the passionate kind of arguing that involves anger, nastiness, raised voices, pouting, accusations, bitterness, threats, abusive language, or even physical violence. Just ask yourself, do these sound like the new man, or the old man? Like fruit of the Spirit, or works of the flesh?

Do you really believe that fighting is beneficial, or are you perhaps wanting to believe it, to explain why you do it?

Are you suggesting that my wife and I can improve our marriage by arguing and fighting?

In the middle of an argument, do you feel more, or less godly? More mature, or more childish?

If you want to be a peacemaker, will arguing help?

If you want to bear the fruit of the Spirit, will arguing help?

If you want greater love with your spouse, will arguing help?

If you want a closer walk with Jesus, will arguing with your spouse help?

If you want better communication between you and your spouse, will arguing help?

If you want your husband to go to church, will arguing help?

If you want the gifts of the Spirit to flow in your life, will arguing help?

Will arguing make your spouse less stubborn?

## How to Have a Good Argument with Your Wife or Husband (Actually, How to Eliminate Arguments)

1. **Examine yourself for pride**, and get rid of it. Prov. 13:10 – “Only by pride cometh contention” If you and/or your spouse are proud, then even ordinary words will become contentious. Also, pride makes it harder to reconcile (“make up”) because you don’t want to admit you were wrong, and you will not be able to honestly apologize.
2. **Be swift to hear and slow to speak.** Jas. 1:19-20 – “Wherefore, my beloved brethen, let every man be swift to hear, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”
3. **Be very careful of what you say, and how you say it.**
  - a. **Think first** – Prov. 15:28 – “The heart of the righteous studieth to answer: but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things.” 18:13 – “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.”
  - b. **Speak softly** – Prov. 15:1 – “A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.” “Soft” doesn’t just mean low volume, but also words that are not abrasive and provocative.
  - c. **Beware of the first words spoken in conflict** – Prov. 17:14 – “The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention before it be meddled with.” Your first words can serve either to exacerbate, or to defuse conflict. Arguing is like any other sin – the more you do it, the easier it gets, and the less serious it seems.
  - d. **Words can wound** – Prov. 18:8 – “The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.” Not just gossip, but all words spoken in anger.
  - e. **Speak the truth, but . . .**
    - i. **Do it in love** – Eph. 4:15
    - ii. **Just because it is true doesn’t mean you have to say it.** 1 P. 4:8 – “. . . Charity shall cover the multitude of sins.” Prov. 17:9 – “He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends.”
4. **Compare the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit**
  - a. **We live a contrast between flesh and spirit** – Gal. 5:16-17
  - b. **Works of the flesh** – Gal. 5:19-21 – some of them that would contribute to marital arguments are hatred, variance, wrath, and strife.
  - c. **Fruit of the Spirit** – Gal. 5:22-23 – love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. If you cultivate the fruit of the Spirit, and starve the works of the flesh, the arguments will cease.
  - d. **Live the crucified life and walk in the Spirit** – Gal. 5:24-25 – “And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”
5. **Women, be in loving submission to your husbands, and not just when it suits your interests, not just when you feel like it.** 1 P. 3:1-6
6. **Men, love your wives and give them honor, and not just when it suits your interests, not just when you feel like it.** – 1 P. 3:7 (or your prayers will be hindered)
7. **Watch out for a special kind of lust** – that is, the desire to be right, to justify yourself, to have your own way, to have the preeminence, to be recognized as “top dog”. Jas. 4:1 – “From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?”

Eph. 4:29-32 – “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”

Do these things, and then see how your arguments go.