

Ever After | The Power of Sacrifice | Discussion Guide - *Nehemiah 4:14; 1 Corinthians 7:28*

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3 Critical Sacrifices Needed for a Great Marriage

All relationships have their challenges but because marriage has the power to be our most significant relationship, it also has the potential to present very serious challenges. Often it takes a pivotal sacrifice in order to tackle these critical opportunities. It should not surprise us that we have problems in our marriage, but we should also know that there are ways to make any marriage better.

1 Corinthians 7:28 (NLT) But if you do get married, it is not a sin. ... However, *those who get married at this time will have troubles...*

The Sacrifice of Conflict

Nehemiah 4:14 (NLT) ...Remember the Lord, who is great and glorious, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes!"

Is a better marriage WORTH a fight? Anything worthwhile in life usually involves some kind of "fight". A better marriage will not just happen. It will take honest conflict to make a better marriage.

Honest conflict is good for your marriage. Of course, there is conflict that is bad for a relationship. Bad conflict is marked with blame shifting, power struggle, escalating and unresolved tension. The most basic cause of a conflict that harms your relationship is summed up in the word *pride*.

Conflict that helps a marriage is marked by maturity. When we work to truly understand the underlying issues that cause our conflicts and work to resolve them, we ease marital tension and build a better relationship.

The Sacrifice of Responsibility

Galatians 6:5 (NLT) For we are each responsible for our own conduct.

Is a good marriage WORTH taking personal responsibility? We do not need to live as a victim. A victim is a person who blames others for their unhappiness and the state of their relationships. It is simple to stop being a victim, start taking responsibility.

So many of the conflicts we experience, especially in marriage, are actually a response to unhealthy behaviors. The responsibility to restore emotional, mental and physical health ultimately lies with the person exhibiting those behaviors.

We may have very difficult wounds and abuses in our pasts. The only way we'll ever be free from them is to take responsibility for their healing. We cannot go back and erase them but we can find support, counseling and prayer ministry to stop those stories of the past from writing our future.

We can also help our partner. We can encourage each other, help each other find resources, and lift each other in prayer. A good marriage is a product of two broken lives healed into one.

The Sacrifice of Forgiveness

Colossians 3:13-14 (NLT) Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. 14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony.

Is a great marriage WORTH the forgiveness it will take? Many struggle with forgiveness. After all, forgiveness by its nature cannot be earned, it must always be given. And even though in our hearts we know we must forgive, we often struggle with trust so much that we are afraid to let people get close.

It would be helpful to remember that forgiveness is never about trusting people. It is always about trusting God. Forgiveness trusts that we are personally forgiven even though we do not deserve it. And, we are able to forgive others, even though they have hurt us and don't deserve it.

There are at least five major areas of contention in the average marriage - Money, Sex, Career, Parenting, and Housework. In order to survive as a loving couple and even reach for a GREAT marriage, we endure many conflicts, take responsibility as often as possible, and in the end forgive each other liberally.

In the end, we must ask ourselves, "What is my marriage worth?" The more we invest and sacrifice the better our relationships will be.

Talk About It!

- What are your first thoughts regarding today's topic? Please share with the group.
- Read **1 Corinthians 7:28**. Is it comforting or disturbing to find that we will have trouble in marriage? Why? Does that assumption challenge your initial hopes for marriage?
- Read **Hosea 2:13-16; 3:1-2**. Discuss God's command to Hosea. Why did God ask this of Hosea? What does this request say about how far we should go for our marriage?
- Discuss the difference between a Good conflict and a Bad one in marriage?
- Share a story about a conflict you have experienced that ended very well. What made it positive in the end? How could other conflicts end in a positive manner?
- Are there areas of your marriage that you are "waiting" for your spouse to address? What responsibility do you have in that area? What could you move forward in that area?
- Have you ever struggled with forgiveness? Share an experience when forgiveness improved your situation? Does anyone in the group need prayer regarding forgiveness?
- Is there anything in today's topic that you would be excited to share with a friend?