

Why Do We Keep Having the Same Arguments?

A Biblical Marriage Worksheet for Putting Off Anger and Putting On Kindness

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Why do the same arguments keep returning?

Perhaps you and your spouse have been married for years. You know the subjects that lead to disagreements, and you can almost predict how the next argument will unfold. Yet the arguments continue.

Many couples describe their problem as poor communication. Communication matters, but Scripture directs our attention deeper. James 4:1 asks about the source of quarrels and conflicts. We must examine the desires and responses of our own hearts.

Disagreement itself is not necessarily sinful. But bitterness, harsh words, selfish demands, and sinful anger must be addressed biblically. The goal is not merely fewer arguments. The goal is to become a more godly husband and wife.

Personal examination - each spouse answers separately

1. What subjects frequently lead to disagreements in our marriage?

2. When my spouse disagrees with me, how do I respond?

3. What am I demanding or wanting when I become angry?

God Made Us Able to Form Habits

God created us with the ability to develop habits. Consider learning the piano, playing basketball, or working as a plumber. The more faithfully someone practices a skill, the more familiar that activity becomes.

Unfortunately, we can practice sinful responses as well as righteous ones. A husband might respond angrily during an argument, fail to deal with that response biblically, and then respond the same way seven weeks later and again five weeks after that. He may be developing a habitual response even though he is not angry every day.

We all experience anger, but not everyone is habituated to sinful anger. We must examine whether anger has become our customary response to disagreement.

Putting off and putting on

Ephesians 4:22-24 teaches believers to put off the old self, be renewed in the spirit of their minds, and put on the new self. It is not enough to decide to stop doing wrong. We must practice the righteous alternative God commands.

In my counseling, I generally teach that developing a new godly habit takes approximately six to eight weeks of faithful, consistent practice. This is a counseling guideline, not a guarantee that every habit changes on a fixed schedule. Two or three days of effort followed by several days of neglect is not faithful practice.

This is not merely behavior modification. Biblical sanctification involves the Holy Spirit working through God's Word to change our thinking, desires, and conduct.

Examine your own pattern

What sinful response have I practiced during disagreements?

What would a godly response look like instead?

One Put-Off and One Put-On

There are many Scriptures addressing anger. For this assignment, however, we will concentrate on one specific biblical pairing. Husband and wife will work on the same assignment.

PUT OFF: ANGER - Ephesians 4:31

Read Ephesians 4:31 in your Bible. Paul commands believers to put away bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, and malice. These sinful responses must not be excused because a spouse disagrees with us.

PUT ON: KINDNESS - Ephesians 4:32

Read Ephesians 4:32 in your Bible. Paul calls believers to be kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving. The husband must not merely stop speaking angrily; he must learn to practice kindness toward his wife. The wife must do the same toward her husband.

Hide the Word in your heart - Psalm 119:11

In counseling, I sometimes ask, "When is your birthday?" Most people answer immediately. They know it so well that they do not have to search for it. You have many things stored in your memory. But knowing something and thinking about it when you need it are not the same thing.

I want you to know your assigned put-off and put-on Scripture so well that it comes readily to mind when you are tempted to respond sinfully.

Make your reminder signs

Memorize Ephesians 4:31-32. Make five or six signs on 8½ x 11-inch paper, writing the assigned verses in large letters and clearly identifying PUT OFF - ANGER and PUT ON - KINDNESS. Post the signs in conspicuous places around your home. Read them and think about them repeatedly throughout the day.

Places where we will post our signs:

Practice Kindness Whether You Feel Like It or Not

Suppose a husband and wife argued last night. The next day the husband does not practice his acts of kindness. When asked why, he says, "I was still angry. I didn't feel like doing anything kind."

We do many things we do not feel like doing. We go to work, wash dishes, and do laundry because they are our responsibilities. We do not obey God only when we feel like obeying. Ephesians 4:32 commands kindness; it does not say to wait until you feel affectionate.

Feelings follow behavior

In Genesis 3:7-10, Adam and Eve's disobedience was followed by shame and hiding. Our conduct can affect our feelings. As we faithfully practice obedience, attitudes and feelings may change over time. That change is not necessarily immediate, and not every painful feeling is caused by personal sin.

Do not practice kindness merely to obtain a pleasant feeling. Practice it because God commands it. Do not wait for your feelings to change before you begin obeying.

The assignment for BOTH spouses

Perform three deliberate, specific acts of kindness toward your spouse every day. For example, a husband might fold a basket of freshly laundered bath towels, wash the dishes, or complete a task that helps his wife. A wife should likewise choose concrete ways to serve her husband. Neither spouse should wait for the other to begin.

Write down what you actually did, not what you intended to do. Continue practicing the same put-off and put-on throughout the six-to-eight-week training period.

What might make me tempted to skip the assignment?

How will I respond obediently even when I do not feel like it?

Helping One Another Grow in Godliness

Galatians 6:1-2 calls believers to restore one another in a spirit of gentleness and to bear one another's burdens. A husband should desire to help his wife become a more godly woman. A wife should desire to help her husband become a more godly man.

Both are responsible for their own sin. Neither may excuse disobedience because of the other's failure. Helping a spouse does not mean policing, criticizing, or becoming a spiritual supervisor. Galatians 6:1 also calls us to examine ourselves.

Striving and laboring by faith - Colossians 1:28-29

I often close counseling sessions by reading Colossians 1:28-29. Paul's goal is to present people complete in Christ. In verse 29 he speaks of laboring and striving according to God's power working in him.

Some Christians emphasize only their own effort: "I must try harder." Others emphasize only divine power: "Let go and let God." Paul brings laboring and God's power together. His words describe his ministry labor; they also teach a principle we can apply to Christian obedience.

You have made an effort to seek counsel, discuss your problems, complete assignments, memorize Scripture, and practice kindness. But you are not merely striving in your own strength. You strive and labor by faith in what God says about sin, obedience, and change, depending on His power to bring about heart-level change.

Our goal is not simply to argue less. Our goal is to become more like Jesus Christ.

Our seven-day beginning

For the next seven days, memorize Ephesians 4:31-32; display five or six reminder signs; pray for God's help; perform and record three acts of kindness daily; repent and seek forgiveness when you sin; and encourage one another gently. This is the beginning, not the end, of sustained practice.

Safety note: This worksheet addresses ordinary marital conflict. Threats, coercion, intimidation, or abuse require appropriate safety measures and individual support; a joint assignment is not a substitute for such intervention.

Daily Kindness Practice Record

Make a copy for each day. Husband and wife may complete separate copies. Bring completed records to your next counseling session.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Today I reviewed Ephesians 4:31-32: Yes / No

Today I prayed for God's help to obey: Yes / No

Three specific acts of kindness I actually performed

1. What I did:

2. What I did:

3. What I did:

Examine your heart

Was there an opportunity to respond with anger? How did I respond?

Did I neglect obedience because I did not feel like it?

Where I sinned, have I repented and sought forgiveness?

Remember: Practice kindness because God commands it, not because your spouse has earned it or because you feel like it.

Keep Practicing - and Help Us Plan the Full Workbook

Do not change to a new put-off and put-on each week. Keep memorizing, remembering, and practicing the same Scripture assignment faithfully. Biblical habits are developed through consistent practice, not occasional good intentions.

After seven days, reflect

What helped me remember the Scriptures during the day?

Which acts of kindness required the most deliberate effort?

How can I gently encourage my spouse without criticizing or keeping score?

Would a complete eight-week training workbook help you?

We are considering a more extensive biblical marriage workbook with weekly teaching, printable Scripture signs, daily records, and guidance for husbands and wives practicing the same biblical assignment.

If this free worksheet has been helpful, visit davidtylerresources.com to find more biblical counseling resources and information about future materials.

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