



James 3:13-18 “Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.”

- It’s more important you are peaceable than you are persuasive
- It’s more important that you are gentle than you get to say everything you feel you need to say
- It’s more important that you are merciful and open to reason, than acting out of the energy inside you that says “that is wrong and I must defend myself and correct that wrong.”

### **A Solution - Practical Tips**

Proverbs 15:1 “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”

### **Avoid The Harsh Start-up**

“The research shows that if your discussion begins with a harsh startup it will inevitably end on a negative note, even if there’s a lot of attempts to make nice in between. Statistics tell the story: 96% of the time you can predict the outcome of a conversation based on the 1st 3 minutes of the 15 minute interaction! A harsh startup simply dooms you to failure period so if you begin a discussion that way you might as well pull the plug comma take a breather comma and start over.” John Gottman *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*

### **Types of Harsh Start-Ups (Gottman, *Seven Principles...*)**

**Criticism** – difference between complaint and criticism is that a complaint addresses a specific action and criticism is negative words about a person’s character or personality

**Defensiveness** – pushing back on what’s said. “The problem isn’t me; it’s you.”

**Contempt**- sarcasm, cynicism, eye-rolling, mockery, hostile humor. It conveys disdain and a lack of respect

**Stonewalling** – shutting down, walking away (it’s ok to take a break, but not quit)

**Practice Openness and Responsiveness** – Instead of competing to be heard, ask each other the following questions:

1. “Tell what you are going through, what is upsetting you, angering you, etc”. – (I am interested and care about what’s going on with you)
2. “Tell me how it’s affecting you / how does it make you feel” (I am empathetic to how it’s affecting you)
3. “Tell me what you need from me that might help (I am open and inviting how I can affect positive change for you.”

Practice this with each other, don’t say anything else, walk away, commit to pray about it for 3 days, come up with specific ways to address the other’s response to the 3 questions

### **SINGLENESS ISSUES**

“Paul, for instance, says it is better to be married than to burn with lust – but if you can, it is good to remain single and focused on the missional task at hand. This approach is radical, giving singleness equal status with marriage and making marriage a vocation within God’s mission rather than a natural or societal necessity. These (are) parallel Christian Vocations – marriage and singleness (Pgs. 147) *Divine Sex* by Jonathan Grant

The church has made a societal idol out of marriage saying marriage the ultimate state and one is not complete until one is married. But the scripture says to view them as equally important to the ultimate and common task married and single people have to know God and to make him known.

- Single people are told to work on themselves for their future spouse; But you should be becoming a whole person because that's what God wants for you, not because of a future spouse. I let go of doing this for an ethereal person. It's who God who is conforming me to the image of Christ in the same way He's doing that in the life of a married person. He calls me to do this for His glory, not primarily for preparing for marriage.
- Married people are conditioned to think their life is normal and that their married status is the way life is supposed to work, and that my life isn't normal. That they're functioning healthily and that something must be wrong with me. I wish they would look at it as what is normal is what we're called to do. You're called to be married and for now I'm called to be single. We both need to be faithful in our callings.

### What to Do When Someone is Unresponsive to Needed Change

Luke 13: 34-35 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *the city* that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen *gathers* her brood under her wings, and you would not *have it!* 35 "Behold, your house is left to you *desolate*;

1. Remember Even Jesus did not "get through" to everyone he sought to have a relationship with.

If Jesus with his miracles, the power of God, the perfect wisdom and guidance of the Spirit, acting in sinless perfection, could not get through to the people he came to deliver, then sometimes we won't either

2. Take note of how Jesus models making sustained sacrificial effort and having great desire for the relationship to flourish, while appropriately not taking responsibility for the impasse

Note whose house Jesus says is desolate

3. Sometimes the best response is Jesus response = **lament**. (instead of bitterness, shame, dismissiveness/apathy, despair, blame)
  - Lament keeps my heart soft toward the person, soft toward a miracle of reconciliation, but safe from false responsibility and hopefully the eventual freedom from a guilty conscience and shame
  - If I express lament to the person, "I know that after all the appeals I've made you're still unwilling to change your mind, or you're still unwilling to compromise with me. And that makes me sad because I so want reconciliation with you" it makes is less likely for hostility to continue.
  - That leaves a person with a paradox – We can't come together because you are unwilling to, and that is not my desire. It sends them away knowing you still want reconciliation, but they also have responsibility in bringing that about.