**Conflict Overview by Lisa Jackson**

Conflict is such an integral part of healthy, growing relationships! This may seem like an odd statement but if you think about it, this is true. Would you want to be in a relationship in which there was never any conflict, to always have someone agree with you, regardless of what they really thought…?? The relationships with no conflict are the superficial ones. If you aren’t able to learn how to resolve conflict in your friendships, then how will you be able to work through conflict in your dating relationships, much less in your marriage…?? I sometimes wonder if people really know how to engage in healthy conflict, to work through the problem and come out stronger on the other side…?? I have observed couples who have been happily married for decades, and their marriages aren’t perfect, but they work through the problems and this has made their union stronger and more resilient when other challenges come along. Compare the way these couples deal with conflict to the way many people deal with it on social media--they get angry and “defriend” someone and consider that their way of resolving the problem! For people who don’t learn how to have healthy conflict, they will take these destructive habits into their dating relationships and much worse, into their marriages! I want to share with you the excerpt below from an article by Jay Firebaugh\* who explains how crucial it is to understand and accept that conflict is a vital part of relationships:

Conflicts are a part of the life cycle of healthy relationships. As Mr. Firebaugh writes about conflict, “*Without it, life never develops, and we never make progress. Forgiveness never occurs without conflict. People disagree and get on each other’s nerves. People are immature, selfish and sinful. Things need to be called out and identified. Truth needs to be spoken. Love needs to be extended. Facing conflict with respect and commitment to each other is the #1 thing missing in our conflict-avoiding culture and that’s why so many homes are broken. People need to stay committed to each other as conflicts are worked through, to “grow up,” show grace, and stick it out. People need to compromise when it’s possible for the sake of continuing relationship, and not take advantage of the other person. Conflict is usually messy on the way to leading to happy endings. Determine to live it in your relationships on the way to pursuing maturity together in Christ. Conflict and staying committed to each other while we navigate through it is the stuff of genuine community.”*

If we can begin thinking about how we deal with conflict in our friendships now and put some of these healthy principles into place, we can take a positive step forward in having better dating relationships and stronger marriages!

*\*Jay Firebaugh is the Director of Small Groups at New Life Church in Gahanna, Ohio (this excerpt was used with permission from Mr. Firebaugh).*

**Ephesians 4:26***: BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger (NASV)*