

Relationship -v- Being Right



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Growing up as the middle girl in a family with six kids teaches you that we win or lose an argument over who can shout the loudest. Being born number four out of three girls and three boys meant I did a lot of yelling growing up. It's the only way any of us could hear each other. Unfortunately, it can become a way of life when you're used to handling relationships that way. In a family like this, one rarely calmly discusses an issue. Talking and communicating have no place. Anger becomes the driving force, often leaving a trail of pain and broken relationships in the wake of those involved.

I'll never forget when this all changed. Michael and I had been married for less than two months. We were standing in the yard, and he said something that infuriated me. I responded by jumping in his face, screaming. He looked at me for a moment and calmly said, "Woman, when you can carry on an intelligent conversation, I'll be in the house." With that, he turned around and strolled inside the house as if he didn't have a care in the world. All I could do was stand there, mouth open, without a word to say. How could I argue if he wasn't there to listen? He wouldn't have heard me if I yelled at him. I knew better than to follow him and argue or yell. There's no telling what he would have done. All I could do was stare at his back as he walked away.

That was a turning point for me. From the beginning of our marriage, we've never really argued. When we disagreed, we focused on what we disagreed with and chose not to hurt one another. We looked for solutions. The only time we ever had to apologize was over a misunderstanding, and we never purposely caused each other pain. Our relationship was too important to us to drive a wedge between us, for any reason. He was my best friend, and I was his. It didn't make sense to either of us to hurt our best friend just because we were angry?

This lesson didn't stop with my husband and children. It took a while, but it eventually seeped into other relationships. Many things happened to us in the nearly 46 years we were together that taught us the importance of a relationship. There was a time when I had to prove I was right. Even though I cared about others, I still had to feel that "God and I" knew the truth.

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This can be destructive behavior for a pastor. Unbridled, it can even lead to one becoming defensive and angry. It's easy to lose your gratefulness to God. You can't understand why others don't appreciate your sacrifices or understand you. You get mad because people don't recognize how what you do for them. Left unchecked, it can lead to bitterness and even total meltdown.

It has taken years, but God's finally taught me that "relationship is more important than being right." There are many times that I completely disagree with another person; however, arguing with her will not change her opinion. Neither will condemnation, censorship, or gossiping about her change her perspective. I've found that if I love her and develop a friendship, she will learn to trust me. Then I gain the influence and respect that will make her want to hear what I have to say. Proverbs 8:2 says, "A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion." Why lose an important relationship just for the surge of "power" or the sense of "pride" we get from feeling right? Does it make any sense? What would happen if we were to admit that we might be wrong occasionally, and maybe bite our tongue, even when we know the other person is wrong? What would happen if everyone committed to holding our opinion for one month? It would change our world, and who knows where that would lead?