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Grounders:

In order to resolve interpersonal conflict, we must connect with the innermost part of the person involved. That is **knowledge**. The Hebrew word for knowledge (*daath*) comes from the same root word used when the writer of Genesis says that Adam *knew* his wife and she conceived (Gen. 4:1). Unfortunately, today most marriages fail for a lack of intimacy, or knowledge. Yet, Proverbs 24:3-5 tells us that knowledge increases our strength to resolve conflict. Knowing our spouse intimately moves us from conflict to community. Solomon gives us four steps to wisely connect with the innermost part of the person with whom we are having conflict.

Step one is to *surrender* the conflict to God (Prov. 1:7). We must surrender our motives, the person(s), the problem, and the outcome. Surrendering removes pressure to force our selfish outcomes and frees us from labeling a person as the problem. Pray to God now, to surrender your conflict to Him.

Step two is to *seek* the motives of the person involved (Prov. 18:15). We accomplish this by asking questions and searching the innermost part of the person behind his words. For example ask, "What do you desire? Why?" The answer to "Why?" will reveal the motive. Most poor interpersonal conflict management focuses on the positions not the interests of those involved. Step two helps us focus on the inside rather than the outside of others.

Step three is to *spell out* our motives humbly and wisely to the other person (Prov. 15:7; 20:15). By first surrendering the conflict to God, we are able to humble our hearts and communicate pure motives with wise words that connect with the other person. Solomon cautions us to choose our words wisely, using restraint (Prov. 17:27). For example say, "My desire is to protect our children from making a mistake with severe consequences for them and those around them." Don't say, "Our children learned their foolish behavior from you."

Step four is to *solve* the conflict by discovering common ground in our motives (Prov. 11:9). Most spouses have exactly the same motives: love, joy, peace, faithfulness, and fulfillment, but they spend too much time focusing on the outside at the expense of exploring the inside. Men, this does not mean that we *fix* our wives; rather, we *feel* with them. For example, after she shares feelings of sorrow with her tone of voice, hold her hand and say, "I know you feel hurt. I hurt too." This alone will solve most marital conflict.

These four steps toward knowledge apply to both *marital* and *marketplace* relationships. Proceed with caution because Solomon offers us three caveats: (1) beware of a fool; it might be you (Prov. 14:6-7); (2) demonstrate a concern for the poor (Prov. 29:7); and (3) don't be in a hurry (Prov. 19:2).

See you Wednesday when we will explore *learning* in conflict.

In Him,
Mitch