

Light in a Dark World

Based on Php 2:14-16

¹⁴ Do everything without complaining or arguing, ¹⁵ so that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in a crooked and perverse generation. Among whom you shine as lights in the world

Do all things without complaining and arguing?. Is that even possible? Can you imagine a world without complaining and arguing? A nation? A home? Why do we complain and argue? Dislike/discontent/dissatisfied we complain and when we disagree we argue.

1. Complaining shapes the brain. Thought processes are literally brain cells firing off to each other in a certain pattern. Which is reinforced by expressing them out loud and then we repeat that complaining pattern which strengthens that neural pathway. It becomes solidified, crystallized. **Hebb's law** - cells that fire together, wire together." This principle explains how neural connections are strengthened through repeated activation. **bent towards negativity. makes future complaining more likely. Over time, easier, natural to be negative than to be positive. Complaining becomes the default behavior, part of the disposition.**

2. What about arguing?

"Laboratory research has shown partners who used more negative and less positive behaviors during conflict, such as criticizing each other or withdrawing from the conversation, had **higher cortisol** levels than their less negative and more positive counterparts" (Shrout et al., 2020a).

Can lead to **low HRV** - affects multiple regulatory systems.

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8474672/>

Conflict **can alter endocrine, cardiovascular, and immune function.**

Danish study - *Stressful social relations and mortality: a prospective cohort study* – J of Epid & Comm Health. "Frequent conflicts with any type of social relation were associated with **2–3 times increased mortality risk.**"

<https://jech.bmj.com/content/68/8/720>

So, is Paul saying here we are never to disagree or dislike something? I don't think so. When a couple tells me they never argue – I have to admit I wonder who is the suck up? who is being manipulated by the other? I hope they are not saying that they never disagree but rather that they have learned how to disagree without arguing

It's possible to disagree without arguing.

Lesson 5: Shining as Lights in the Night (Monday)

We can dislike without creating darkness, without casting blame or harming each other. But it doesn't come naturally and few of us learned healthy rules of combat in the homes we grew up in.

Share Biblical Rules of combat/ strife.

1. **Pr 30:33 — as the churning of milk brings forth butter, the wringing of the nose brings forth blood; so the pressure of wrath brings forth strife.** There's a pressure that builds before people blow up. How do we release the pressure so the butter and blood of strife aren't brought forth? I don't believe the answer is to bottle it up.
1st before any words come out of the mouth: Take a deep breath say a prayer – release the steam/pressure – shift your internal state, take yourself out of sympathetic nervous system response where we want to **fight** with strong fierce words, take **flight** and storm out of the room or give silent treatment, hang up the phone, ignore the text, or **fright**- defend ourselves. Quietness, entrust your case to your Heavenly attorney
2. **Pr 22:10 – Cast out the scorner and contention shall leave, yes strife and reproach shall cease.** Cast out the goal of winning the argument, scornfully putting the other in their place– we all know that doesn't work so good in relationships. Make the goal connection. I want to connect with this person and hear them out. – I don't have to feel threatened. It won't hurt me to seek to understand them or acknowledge their perspective.
3. **Pr 29:22 – An angry man stirs up strife but he that is slow to anger appeases strife.** Control your emotions and tone of voice while having the disagreement. If you can't then wait til you can.
4. **Ja 1:19 – let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.** EAR – Empathy – listen – who has the mic? Where is this person coming from? I want to hear you out- want you to feel heard. Rather than my words being a comeback, I'm going to begin by saying back to the other what you heard them say. this is not when we verbalize our disagreement. That's the next step. A – assertive about your perspective. This is where you get the mic while the other is listening and saying back to you what they heard. R - Respectfully.
5. **The Lord looks at the heart** – good thing to do when in a disagreement - Identify the core issue – sometimes the core is very different than the actual topic of disagreement. Background – a reason the person is so upset

We naturally cast blame, are scornful which isn't respectful and end up arguing unless – by the **power of God over our minds and tongue we** learn how to ¹⁵become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in a crooked and perverse generation. Among whom you shine as lights in the world - such a contrast!

Lesson 5: Shining as Lights in the Night (Monday)

When we think of worldliness we tend to focus externals: look – but complaining, arguing, criticism, meanness, ugliness of disposition – let's start there