



Christian Report

VOLUME 24 ISSUE 6 JUNE 2024

Charting a Course For Christian Marriage

Growing Through and Tempering Daily Conflicts.

We closed our last letter making plans to award a BRAVO ZULU challenge coin to a beloved nephew who had completed a rigorous course to become a professional metal worker and welder. Happily, I can say the coin was well received and much appreciated. If our fellow CMF members who go to work on dry land or fly from same regularly couldn't find a sailor to snag the meaning of a well earned "BZ", we'll help you out. "BRAVO ZULU" is the time honored nautical flag signal for "Job Well Done." Trust us. That signal is not flown nearly as much as it should be either in our professional work or informally in our personal relationships. One of our mantras has been "catch each other doing something right" and let them know you appreciate it. This solid advice is especially valid as we tackle the daily problems of living.

Resolving daily conflicts is a topic that overlaps to a considerable degree with our previous one — risking emotional vulnerability — and is often only separated by degree of difficulty and depth of problem. The methodology we discussed previously last month was about how to get a tough discussion started off in the right direction by exposing one's own vulnerability on some level.

This is especially applicable to even those inevitable daily conflicts that arise. We have a code word for these more routine conflicts. We call them "growth moments." Marriage presents these regular "growth

moments" as our personal preferences inevitably run into our spouse's own perspectives about some aspect of how we organize and live our lives.

We have occasionally accompanied these "growth moments" in our own marriage with a now humorous reference to a euphemism shared by an old psychology mentor of Herschel's. Here is the story.

When Herschel's transition from Surface Warfare Officer (SWO) to the Medical Service Corps (MSC) back in 1974 was not meeting his young expectations, the wily, older Navy psychiatrist to whom he bitterly complained, himself a former Marine pilot, remarked, as only a former Marine could, "Well, Herschel, (and he paused to let out a sigh) it appears the Navy Medical Department offends your sense of omnipotence!"

So, yes, even in a Christian marriage our beloved can from time to time "offend our sense of omnipotence" The key is to turn the triggers for negative feelings into an opportunity for marital benefit and emotional growth. We believe it is helpful, nay, essential to see these "growth moments" as natural events in our spiritual growth both as a couple and as individuals. Some basic truths become evident at these times.

Sometimes God tries to get our attention by placing people and situations in our path. Christ often speaks to us through problems and events that distress and annoy us to help us become more Christ like. Little irritations with our spouse may be areas He is speaking to you about your own spiritual growth.



(Continued from page 1)

When we see a behavior or an attitude in our spouse that we would like to change, remember that God is already working to make changes in them and is more capable of achieving those changes than you will ever be. You can help the process most by carefully observing growth and changes in your spouse and letting your spouse know that you see those changes – you are in the best position to be a cheering section.

There are, however, some practical steps for conflict resolution that are helpful while a couple endeavors to work through a “growth moment.” At some point we may decide that we need to ask our spouse to do something or make a change. Prayerfully consider how and when to best present your request. It helps to present your need in positive terms stating what you want to be different, how it can positively impact both of you and the positive feelings it could produce in both of you. Staying behaviorally specific and limiting the request to an observable specific behavior rather than a broad revamping of a personality trait will likely be much more productive. Also, it is good to keep in mind that trying to make major changes in your spouse to be more like you prefer, even if successful, risks robbing them of the personality traits that may have been part of what attracted you to them initially.

Hopefully you will both be able to come to an agreement and move on. However, if problem solving is not going the way you desired (in other words when things bog down, emotions are highly aroused or conflict escalates), it can be helpful to take a break with a specific time and place to resume the discussion. Giving your spouse the opportunity to withdraw temporarily when overloaded emotionally during conflict is a caring and loving act because it is hard to let go of an issue before it is resolved. We all have limits on how well we can discuss issues when our emotions are aroused. At some point in conflict escalation, how we are treating each other in the discussion could become more important than the original issue or problem being addressed. Name calling, bringing up past hurts, slamming doors, yelling in front of children;

these are typical indicators that a “time out” is the most loving act a couple can show one another. **We have often recommended the sports “time out” hand gesture of making a “T” with both hands.** As in almost all-sports time outs, there is an agreed upon time frame. Among couples it needs to be the time interval that the spouse with the longest cooling down profile needs.

This is a good place to mention that the hardest times for couples to work out problems are typically around dinner time. Everyone is tired and hungry, so it makes sense to find a better



time to talk something out. This domestic data was made even more poignant years ago when we stumbled onto some old military data that more recruit abuse in “boot camps” occurred during the same evening meal timeframe.

During this break prayerfully consider your part in the current problem and remember, this is someone you love. In any case, recognizing that you have gotten off course and agreeing to get back to the topic is important. When you resume the discussion, talk about the process that is happening and how the effort for resolution has gotten off track. If this is a subject about which you both have strong feelings, it may help to take turns stating what each thinks and feels, and then letting the other person restate what they have heard before taking their own turn to state thoughts and feelings. Stay focused on the problem at hand. Try to keep a sense of humor by learning to be amused rather than annoyed by your partner’s idiosyncrasies as this can take the sting out of an argument.

After your discussion, even if you have had apparent

(Continued on page 3)

agreement, it may not result in the kind of change you were hoping to see. It is usually best to let matters ride for a while if you can bear to do so. Otherwise, it can easily become nagging, which is woefully ineffective in getting someone to change. Planting a seed for your spouse to ponder may be the best strategy for the time being.

It may surprise you to know that we have had several “growth moments” during the writing of this paper and that we used many of the problem-solving tech-



niques we mentioned to resolve those differences and come to a better (we hope) final product. The growing never ends, but we get better and better with time, experience and the help of the Spirit.

One additional note; this type of communication and problem solving may be new to some of you and perhaps even to seem impossible. Fortunately, we don't have to get things right the first time we try them or even after several attempts. Our loving Father has a plan for us even if we make serious errors and often, He brings us to a better place or situation than we had ever imagined.

As an example of this principle, let us share our story with you.

We are convinced that God brought us together. We were struggling young adults when we met. Anne

had divorced several years before, and Herschel was in the process of going through a divorce. To this day we cannot adequately explain the enigma that we see at work in our family. We were blessed with five amazing adult children, their much-loved spouses, and seven grandchildren all of whom are from our first marriages. The best we can come to grips with this blessing and many others we encounter in our family life is that life remains a mystery that we will not understand until we are in Heaven and get to see God's big picture for all of His creation. Yes, we married young as was the custom for our generation. Yes, we came of age during wartime. Yes, the sixties and seventies were a hellish environment within which to build a family. We would like to be able to escape accountability for our youthful mistakes and misjudgments with those explanations. Those elements did play a role, but we know now that we did fail in our first marriages. And our children shared in the pain of those losses.

As psychologists and as Christians we can understand some aspects of those early years now much better than we did then. What we do know most clearly is that throughout that past God still had a plan for us. Perhaps it was even THE plan. In any event, we know He brought us together and has sustained us every day since. He has inspired us to place even greater importance on the sanctity of marriage both in our personal and professional lives and shown us the infinite joy that comes from the commitment to appreciate and preserve the uniqueness and specialness that is ours and each other couple's sacred marriage.

We draw not just a physical boundary around our marriage (our home), but an emotional one as well. We respect the privacy of thoughts, feelings and actions that is unique to us as a couple. Likewise, we respect those boundaries that other couples enjoy. We truly embrace Christ's explanation that we (and all other couples) are indeed involved in the process of becoming one flesh.

We know we have introduced several challenging

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

concepts in both our previous letter and this one. In many respects letters 5 and 6 belong together. Growing through marital and family conflicts requires exposure of our vulnerable emotions within the context of emotional and physical safety. Good “I statements” are often helpful in starting conversations, or even bringing down the level of disagreement once matters heat up to an uncomfortable level. Hopefully, we have injected a little humor by introducing the frankly honest concept of our spouses capability of “offending our sense of omnipotence.”

We encourage respecting those “growth moments”, work at the greater wisdom that comes from working them out, monitor the level of conflict and take time outs as needed, respect the uniqueness and specialness of marriage by posting a good “perimeter watch,” and above all—catch one another doing something good and praise each other accordingly. And with that parting advice, these aging “salty shrinks” will head once again for their respective Laz-y-boy’s!

Dr. Herschel Hughes, Jr., CDR, MSC, USNR (Ret.) and Dr. Anne S. Hughes, LCDR, USNR (Ret.) are CMF Local Reps who are engaged in CMF’s Marriage & Family and Combat Trauma Ministries. During different seasons of the year, they are able to adopt a vagabond lifestyle with their RV and enjoy traveling to different military ministry posts while continuing their own Bible teaching and ministry via video conference.

TAPS: In Memoriam

It is always with great sadness to us remaining here on earth to learn of the passing of our beloved friends and co-laborers in the Kingdom. Yet we rejoice as they

have been promoted to their great reward, for as it is written “...no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him...” (1 Cor 2:9). Indeed, what is sorrow for us is not sorrow for them, and their homecoming is precious in the eyes of our Heavenly Father (Ps 116:15).

Mrs. Jeannie Becker — April 28, 2023. Jeannie Jones Becker passed away at home last year with her husband of 56 years, CAPT Wayne Becker, USCG (Ret), at her side. As a naval officer, Jeannie served in the Pentagon on the CNO’s communication staff and as education officer at a naval air station. She appeared in some recruiting films. After her time in the Navy, Jeannie raised her family, taught preschool and served as a radio host developing new programs and interviews. Jeannie is interred at Arlington National Cemetery.

Kipton Chris Gustin — January 28, 2024. Longtime CMF Member “Kip”, also known as “Gus” to some of his friends, passed away at age of 87 at Harborview Medical Center in Seattle, WA after suffering a stroke. Kip served in the Navy as Naval Airman from June 1955 to June 1960 and then with the Israeli Defense Forces in 1998. His passing was peaceful, and Kip went straight into the arms of Jesus.

CSM Clark Dustin “Dusty” Toler, USA (Ret) — April 24, 2024. Dusty served in the U.S. Army and Reserve for 23 years. He served in the Vietnam War where he received 3 Purple Hearts, 2 Silver Stars, 7 Bronze Stars & POW Medal. Dusty is survived by his wife, Barbara, and his two sons. Dusty is interred at the Neal Cemetery in Flippin, KY, and was buried with full military honors.

“He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

CHRISTIAN MILITARY FELLOWSHIP

An Indigenous Ministry • Discipleship • Prayer • Community • Support
Encouraging Men and Women in the United States Armed Forces, and their families, to love and serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christian Military Fellowship is a long-time recipient of Ministry Watch’s “Shining Light” Ministries. To become a MinistryWatch “Shining Light,” a ministry must have earned a 5-star rating on MinistryWatch’s 5-star financial efficiency scale. Further, those ministries on this list have a Transparency Grade of “A.” That’s MinistryWatch’s highest transparency grade. Few ministries meet these strict criteria.

Mailing Address: PO Box 449
Veradale, WA 99037-0449
(800)798-7875
(303)761-1959
<https://www.CMFHQ.ORG>
office@CMFHQ.org

We are accredited members of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability and have been awarded a Platinum Seal from Guidestar/Candid in order to maintain the highest standards of excellence and accountability.

