



### **Biblical Principles for Fighting Fair**

1. People are never to be hit, pushed, shoved, grabbed, restrained, or subjected to angry physical touch in any way. Never use threatening gestures.

*Do not envy the violent, or choose any of their ways. Proverbs 3:31*

2. Never put labels on your partner (“you’re hopeless”, “you’re stupid”, “you idiot”). No name-calling or profanity should enter into the disagreement, ever. Communicate in an adult manner, as you would toward any other adult you might have issue with. Totally avoid sarcasm, put-downs, obscene gestures, humiliating statements, mimicry, or other gestures such as eye-rolling. Anger must always be expressed in a respectful manner.

*Whoever derides their neighbor has no sense,  
but the one who has understanding holds their tongue. Proverbs 11:12*

3. Agree on a time to fight about disagreements. People do not react well to unpleasant surprises. It’s unfair to jump someone with a complaint when they are not expecting it. Make a “date” to discuss a disagreement at a time when both parties are not overly tired or pressed for time.

*There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens:  
... a time to be silent and a time to speak. Ecclesiastes 3:1, 7b*

4. Be specific when you introduce a complaint. Don’t offer a complaint or criticism without a recommendation. Help problem-solve the solution. Laying on a litany of general complaints & criticism with no solutions is a way of tearing down the other person. It creates distance, escalates resentment, and drives you further from resolution.

*“Love your neighbor as yourself. If you keep on biting and devouring each other,  
watch out or you will be destroyed by each other. Galatians 5:14b-15*

5. Be respectful and tolerant of the other person’s feelings. Don’t say “you shouldn’t feel that way” or “you have no right to feel angry.” Be open to your own feelings and equally open to your partner’s.

*Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers,  
fear God, honor the emperor. 1 Peter 2:17*

6. Always consider compromise as an option. Not all issues need to go your way – be willing to give in for the sake of the relationship or your partner’s feelings. Remember, your partner’s view of reality is just as real as yours, even though they may differ.

*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,  
not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. Philippians 2:3-4*

7. Never assume you know what your partner is thinking. Check it out – ask for specifics – get clarification. LISTEN objectively and repeat back what your partner’s viewpoint is.

*My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen,  
slow to speak and slow to become angry. James 1:19*

8. Do not bring third parties into the argument. Do not quote friends, relatives, coworkers, or enemies who are not present. It's not fair to your partner or to the third party to use them against your partner. You may be misquoting and your partner does not have a chance to defend themselves to the third party.

*A perverse person stirs up conflict, and a gossip separates close friends. Proverbs 16:28*

9. Do not bring up past history. If your complaint is more than two days old and you have not yet said anything, drop it. It is unfair to bring up something that is so long ago that the other person may not even remember it. If something has once been resolved, never bring it back up.

*Whoever would foster love covers over an offense,  
but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends. Proverbs 17:9*

10. Stick to only one issue until it is resolved. When you make the date to discuss a disagreement, identify the issue you want to talk about and then stick to that topic only. It is not productive or fair to throw in all kinds of other complaints. People can usually only settle one thing at a time, and rehearsing a litany of complaints perpetuates the argument unnecessarily.

*As charcoal to embers and as wood to fire,  
so is a quarrelsome person for kindling strife. Proverbs 26:21*

11. Never misuse the TIME-OUT technique by walking away when your partner expresses anger, or by giving the "silent treatment". Anger is an emotion which is allowable to both parties, and needs to be adequately expressed in order to accomplish a sense of resolve. Anger must always be expressed in a respectful manner.

*Better is open rebuke than hidden. Proverbs 27:5*

12. Do not attack the other person's sensitive points. If you know the other person is sensitive about weight, family background, educational level, etc., don't use that against him/her. You are not out to demean your partner, but to deal with the issue.

*Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Matthew 5:7*

13. Do not end the day angry. Agree to disagree for a while if necessary. You may have worn each other out for the time being. Make a date to talk about the subject again later. Avoid using the bedroom as a battleground. The bedroom should be a sanctuary for sleeping and loving moments, and not a place of hostility.

*In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry Ephesians 4:26*

14. Maintain a close physical distance during the disagreement. Keep eye contact. It's hard to feel rejected and maintain anger when there is close contact. Use the other's first name or affectionate nickname, not derogatory descriptions.

*A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity. Proverbs 17:17*

15. Work for a solution in which both persons win something, not one person a winner and the other a loser. Losers always keep score and get even if possible, or give up on the relationship.

*He who seeks good, finds good will. Proverbs 11:27a*