



Bill and Theresa's Argument from *The Emotionally Destructive Marriage* (Chapter Three)

How a couple can resolve these power struggles in a godly way

In chapter three, I said, "In a healthy marriage when a couple faces a conflict of values or priorities, they talk it through, respecting one another's perspective."

Here's an example of how Teresa and Bill's conversation might have gone if they had a healthier marriage.

"Hi Denise, Oh wow, that is stressful. Sure, I'd love to help you but can I get back to you in a few minutes?" Teresa hangs up the phone and turns to her husband Bill.

"Bill, Denise is having a terrible problem opening a document she needs for work. It can't wait and she really needs my help. I know you prefer that I not talk on the phone when you're home, but it's an emergency and I want to help her get this document open."

Bill frowns. "I know you want to help your sister, but I was hoping we could spend this evening together uninterrupted."

Teresa said, "Bill, I don't think this will take too long, but I would really appreciate your understanding here. We can have the rest of the evening together."

"I hear you. It's fine."

As Teresa talked with her sister, Bill chose not to brood over Teresa's decision to put her sister's needs ahead of him. Instead Bill reminded himself that Teresa is a loving person who enjoys helping others but that doesn't mean she doesn't love or care for him.

When she got off the phone, Teresa thanked Bill for understanding (not permission) and then shut off her phone, respecting Bill's desire to have the rest of the evening together uninterrupted.

A healthy couple negotiates compromises, sacrifices and mutually submits for the welfare of their relationship and the love of one another. Force should not be used to make the other person give in. When it happens as a part of their relationship it is abusive and destructive.