**SLIDE 1 “Fight To Win”**

Series: Conflict – Week 1

February 2-3, 2019 / Dr. Tracy Spaur

Bumper video:

Superbowl intro: We’re starting this series on Super bowl weekend because we can use it to illustrate conflict.

For the entire NFL season there has been conflict after conflict building up to this epic battle of who will win the Superbowl. Millions of Americans will be watching the conflict.

Both teams are using the same basic strategy  Fight to Win! And that strategy is fun to watch in sports, but it can be devastating when “Figh to Win” strategy is transferred over to relationship conflicts.

In this sermon series we want to help improve your relationships skills by teaching you healthy ways of resolving conflicts.

We are going to do that by looking at four **BAD** strategies for handling relationship conflict.

Today I’m going to talk about the wrong attitude of…

1. Fight to win
2. Head in the Sand – from Pastor Sharon Little
3. Run and Hide – From Pastor Wynne Lankford
4. Avoid and Deny – from Pastor Robin Harper

So, you get to hear from 4 different speakers, and get 4 different perspectives.

Together we want to teach you:

**SLIDE 2**

**The right ways of RESOLVING conflict without**

**DISSOLVING relationships.**

Because having a conflict is normal in relationships. You cannot have two people in an authentic relationship and not have conflict. The only way to not have conflict is for one of you to be a zombie.

Valerie and I have the normal number of conflicts, even after 42 years of marriage.

**REFRIGERATOR:** Valerie has this annoying habit of leaving the refrigerator door open while she is in the kitchen doing stuff. I hear the refrigerator door alarm going off…ding, ding, ding. It drives me crazy! What that alarm is saying to me is that the COLD IN THE REFIGERATOR IS POURING OUT! And now it’s making the house cold. I hate waste. So, I close the door and she asks, “why did you close the door, I was coming right back.”

That may sound like a silly thing to you, but you know what I mean.

Conflicts happen in every relationship. You can’t avoid conflict. It doesn’t mean that anything is wrong, it means you are normal!

What is important about conflicts is this,

**SLIDE 3**

**HOW** you work out your conflict is **more important** sometimes,

than **WHAT** the conflict is about.

Today, we are going to look at a bad way to handle conflict and that is the “FIGHT TO WIN” approach.

This is easy to slide into because our whole society worships winning.

You’ve probably heard the famous Vince Lombardi quotes:

-Winning isn’t everything, it’s the only thing.

-Second place is just the first place loser.

-Show me a good loser and I will show you a loser.
**SLIDE 4 (stadium pic)**

We love winners and love winning. And there’s nothing wrong with wanting to win in sports competitions. (Superbowl teams? Some of you are really wanting the Patriots to win and some of you are really wanting the Patriots to LOSE! And some of you don’t care!)

Fight to win is not a bad motivation in sports or work or play. I don’t want a participation medal --- unless it’s a triathlon or marathon – I want the winner to win.

But “Fight to win” is NOT good in relationships. Conflict and warfare aren’t the same thing. Warfare is when you try to destroy the other person.

**SLIDE 5**

Godly relationships don’t have winners and losers.

You see, if you have a “win-lose” mentality in relationships, there will always be someone who keeps score and there will always be someone who wants to settle a score.

**SLIDE 6**

A “win-lose” mentality always breeds a “revenge” mentality.

That’s okay in sports. If a team wins and then tries to rub it in and taunt the other team for being (forehead symbol) “losers” then what comes next???? A rematch. A grudge-match. Revenge!

It’s no fun to live in a relationship with a score-keeper who is seeking revenge for their last loss. The “Fight to win” kind of mentality is NOT the way to build a health relationship.

For example, in marriage if you are constantly making the other person a loser, then you are married to ….. a loser. Your spouse wasn’t a loser when you married them. Could it be that you made your spouse into a loser by your own “Fight to Win” compulsion?

**SLIDE 7**

Now, let me clarify what I’m saying. There’s a difference between “**I’M** right” and “**WHAT’S** right.”

Do you have to be the one that is right? Or are you seeking for a right relationship?

Our politicians are sometimes poor examples of this. It’s all about making the other person look like a loser. It’s about appearance not substance. Make the other guy look as bad as possible. Win at all counts!

So, if you find yourself in a conflict and feel yourself arguing with the “I’m right and you’re wrong” kind of “fight to win” mentality, you need to call a foul on YOURSELF.

Now, since it is Superbowl (Weekend) Sunday, maybe we should pause for a half-time report from our commentators to see how I’m doing so far in this sermon.

**Half-time video:**

Okay, I’ll try to do better in the second half!

The Old Testament book of 1 Samuel tells the story of a personal conflict between King Saul and David. King Saul had a “fight to win” mentality in his relationship with David.

**Story of Saul and David:** God had chosen Saul to be the first king over Israel but Saul let the power and prestige of being king go to his head. So, God sent his pink slip by way of his prophet Samuel:

*“Then the word of the Lord came to Samuel: “I am grieved that I have made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions.”* (1 Samuel 15:10-11, NIV84)

So, the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul and he became a tormented person. His advisors suggested that some comforting music might make him feel better and so they recruited the renown harp-playing musician named David, son of Jesse, to provide soothing background music.

*“David came to Saul and entered his service. Saul liked him very much, and David became one of his armor-bearers. Then Saul sent word to Jesse, saying, “Allow David to remain in my service, for I am pleased with him.””* (1 Samuel 16:21–22, NIV84)

That’s how their friendship began.

Then the enemy armies of the Philistines came to attack Israel and King Saul and his men were in a stand-off. The Philistines had this giant warrior name Goliath. He was their superhero.

King Saul and his men were afraid. But young David believed God was greater than any superhero. So God helped David to miraculously kill Goliath.

This great feat made David an instant celebrity. But Saul became jealous of this fame because Saul had a “Fight to win” attitude. He didn’t want to share the spotlight. So, his relationship with David deteriorated love into open violence.

David fled from Saul’s presence and became a fugitive as Saul pursued him in a cat and mouse game. David tried to reconcile with Saul a number of times but to no avail.

Finally, in chapter 24, Saul hears that David and his men were hiding in a place called, “the Rocks of the Wild Goats.” So King Saul took 3,000 of his choice troops and headed there to kill David. On the way there, Saul had to stop to use the restroom.

Unfortunately, there were no rest stops or restaurants or even gas stations!

There were only bushes and if you were lucky you might find a cave. Fortunately for Saul, there was a cave nearby.

So, he entered the cave took off his robe and began to do what is known in Hebrew as *sakak* (saw·kak) *regel* (reh·gel). I’ll let you translate that into!

Now you may be wondering ---- why does the Bible reports such a detail? Then you read further and find out that this restroom cave was a rather large cave. And further back in this cave, was none other than David and his men hiding there in this unlikely place.

When David saw that it was King Saul, his men whispered to him, that this was his chance to take revenge on King Saul. So David sneaked up behind him and – (hand motion to raise knife)… No, instead he quietly cut the edge off of Saul’s robe and then snuck back undetected!

Then when Saul was finished, he left the cave. Just then David called out to him and said “Look, I have the edge of your robe in my hand.” I could have killed you but I didn’t, because I am not against.”

Saul was so overwhelmed by this gesture that he began to weep saying in verse 17,

**SLIDE 8-10**

*17 “You are more righteous than I,” he said. “You have treated me well, but I have treated you badly. 18 You have just now told me of the good you did to me; the Lord delivered me into your hands, but you did not kill me. 19 When a man finds his enemy, does he let him get away unharmed? May the Lord reward you well for the way you treated me today.”* (1 Samuel 24:17–19, NIV84)

Saul’s “win-lose” mentality produced a bitterness that blinded him and sadly isolated him away from experiencing true friendship.

David’s attempts at reconciliation were righteous in God’s eyes and ultimately David was the blessed man after God’s own heart.

**Avoiding the “Win-Lose” trap:** So the next time you enter a conflict and you feel yourself lured into the “win-lose” trap, ask yourself three questions:

**SLIDE 11-13**

1. “Is my goal to WIN this conflict or is my goal to RESOLVE this conflict?”
2. “Am I trying to be right or am I trying to make this relationship right?”
3. “Do I prefer the isolation of being “the lone winner” or the comforts and benefits of sharing in a close relationship?”

The story of Saul and David could have been so different. Saul could have shared the spotlight with David with a “win-win” attitude. Saul and David could have been close allies and friends. But Saul was:

-too insecure and

-too addicted to approval and power.

He died an isolated man.

The truth about yourself is revealed in conflict.

 **SLIDE 14**

**How we resolve a conflict often tells us**

**as much about our self as it does the other person.**

**SLIDE 15**

Conflict reveals three things about us:

1. Our character development. Our integrity. Our patience.
2. Our emotional health. Our insecurities. Saul was insecure and he was challenged by David’s successes. Conflict reveals our fears and our self-worth.
3. Our spiritual maturity. How close we are to God and His heart. Do we value the other person as an equal image-bearer of God, equally loved my God?

Our conflicts are not between two people – there are always three parties involved in a conflict. You, the other person, and God. God cares about each person and how we treat each other matters to our Heavenly Father.

Relationships matter to God! That’s why relationships are in the second great commandment “Love your neighbor as yourself”

You see, to God, we are all his children. Made in His image. Endowed with his gifts and abilities. We all bear the image of God and are equally loved by God. God doesn’t want any of his children made to feel like losers.

**SLIDE 16**

**(Picture of kids/grandchildren)** I love all my kids/grandchildren! If they get in a conflict with one another, I don’t want any of them to be a loser. I want them all to get along and work through their conflicts. By the way, I have two more on the way. Claire Marie and Micah are coming in March and April.

When we see through the eyes of God, we see everyone as equally loved by our Heavenly Father. So, when you have a conflict, God does not pick winners and losers.

Here’s what God says about how we should treat each other:

**SLIDE 17**

*“Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”* (Ephesians 4:32, NASB95)

**SLIDE 18-20**

*2 “Be of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. 3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”* (Philippians 2:2–4, NASB95)

In fact, a tighter translation is, “Forget your own self-interests all together and focus on the interests of others.”

God wants a family where everyone cares for each other, and everyone walks in unity.

The rule that God wants us to use is called the golden rule.

**SLIDE 21**

*“Treat others the same way you want them to treat you.”* (Luke 6:31, NASB95)

A WIN-LOSE mentality does NOT follow the golden rule. For them, the golden rule is corrupted into, “Whoever has the gold, makes the rules!”

So, what are some signs of a developing “Win-Lose” addiction?

**SLIDE 22-24**

1. When conflict arises, people begin to avoid you or stop talking to you altogether.
2. When you care more about the possibility of winning than the possibility of wounding.
3. When walking away with a trophy alone seems better to you than walking away together with shared trophies.

Steps to recover from a “Win-Lose” mentality:

**SLIDE 25-27**

1. Separate the conflict from the relationship. Make the conflict into a third thing that is testing the quality your relationship.
2. Instead of fighting to **BE** right, fight for your relationship to be right.
3. Instead of searching for ONE path for YOU to win, search for ALTERNATIVE paths for both to win. Winning is not just ONE thing. Winning can be two or more things that allow each one to share the trophy. It’s called a WIN-WIN (named after Pastor Wynne)

Tonight, when one of the teams wins, they will get a team trophy and everyone on the team shares in that same trophy. That’s what we want in relationships. We look for team trophies not MVP trophies.

**SLIDE 28**

Pride wants to win **ALONE**. Love wants others to win **TOGETHER**.

In relationships “compromise” is not a bad word. But people with a “win-lose” mentality think that compromise is bad. “Win-Lose” language frames compromise as “caving” or “giving in.”

**Refrigerator story revisited:** Let’s go back to the refrigerator conflict. The ding, ding, ding, of the door left open still bothers me. But it doesn’t bother Valerie.  She has a different value system. She would rather focus on being efficient because she knows that she’s coming back to the refrigerator for more stuff. I value different things. I value the cold falling out of the refrigerator and being wasted and causing the refrigerator to have to run more.

Valerie is different for me. Not “bad,” but different. So, I have to remind myself that it’s okay for her to be different.

I have chosen to value her differences **more** than the refrigerator. Valerie is more important to me than the electric bill.  So, **our agreement is this:** Valerie closes the refrigerator sooner because of me. And I allow the door to stay open longer than I would otherwise. It’s called love. It’s called compromise.

So, I’ve talked about me, what about you?

- “win-lose” tendencies?

- pride? caused you to devaluate others?

Do you need to humble yourself and make some apologies?

Let’s ask God to search our hearts.

Prayer: