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*Dear Lord, too often I am quick to speak and slow to hear. The power struggle edges out your calm patient responses and replaces my desire to enfold myself and others in the kind, patient and gentle love of your presence. I often find myself spinning around in negative judgments towards myself and others. Enter into my mind and shine the light of your peace into the crevices of darkness that harbor the serpents of slander, judgment and quarreling. Your grace is my salvation and saves me again and again from ungodly expressions that result from my need to be right, liked and understood which expresses itself in blaming, shaming and criticizing behavior. Nothing thrives in this state of war. Grant me the grace to step away from the power struggle that too often sabotages the relationships I care most about. More of you God and less of me. It is for freedom you have set me free help me to stand firm and not allow myself to be burdened by the yoke of slavery to the power struggle.*

**Edge God In Podcast Week 21: Release the Power Struggle:** *God’s Word on Slander, Judgement & Quarrels*

In the previous podcast: *Open Up to God’s Will*, we explored releasing bondage in our life and tune into God’s Plan. In this Edge God In podcast you will learn specific scriptures and practices to help you step away from the power struggle that fuels ugly talk, stone throwing and combat behavior and communication.

Learn:

Nothing thrives in a state of war. A power struggle is a situation where two or more people or groups compete for control in a particular sphere. Sound familiar? Usually this desperate attempt to maintain or gain control over another person’s perspectives, belief systems or positionality flows directly from our EGO’s insatiable desire to win, be right, liked, understood or “save another from their own ignorance (lack of knowledge or information).” Countless relationships have dissolved in the petri dish of the power struggle.

Can you imagine if you allowed other people to be different from you, including having different perspectives of the same situation how much head space that would free up for you to fill with the presence of God’s love, kindness and ability to draw all people into Himself? Judgement repels and love draws in. It is important to note that love for another does not mean you have to agree with their perspectives and positionality, it simply makes a way for mutual respect which walks hand in hand with kindness.

So why all of the slander, quarrelling and judgement? What is the main fuel behind ugly behavior that we find ourselves face to face with these days in spite of our desire to make God recognizable in this world?

Fear? Fear is an unpleasant emotion caused by the belief that someone or something is dangerous, likely to cause pain, or a threat. The body remains calm until the mind defines a situation as a potential threat to its safety at which point a cascade of neuro-chemicals are dumped into our “earth suit” rendering us imprisoned by only three choice points for response: fight; flight or freeze.

Perhaps we are afraid that by offering other people the grace and space to stand in different perspectives and beliefs that somehow we will dilute our own convictions?

This is a question worthy of reflection: Do I feel safe in conversations where the receiver of the dialogue stands in a different positionality? If my response to this question is no then this reveals an attachment which is an emotional state of clinging due to the belief that without some specific outcome or thing I cannot feel safe (happy, content, loved, connected).

What am I afraid of losing if I offer the receiver of my conversation grace and safe space to voice their different perspectives? Every time you choose to engage in an argument of positionality consider the opportunity before you to identify and adjust your perspective from I’m right and you are wrong into a simple prayer: *“Dear God, how can I make you recognizable in this conversation? Grant me the grace of safe space and respect so that this person feels your love for them over my need to be right, win and override their perspectives. Help me to love first then lead as you will guide me. I am your ambassador and you are making your appeal through me…too often I make my own appeal for me.”*

Reflect:

A quarrel is an angry (a strong feeling of annoyance, displeasure, or hostility) argument or disagreement, typically between people who are usually on good terms. What annoys or frustrates you in conversation usually indicates an opportunity to communicate how you feel in a calm, confident manner. There is a powerful healthy protocol put forth by Harville Hendrix and Helen Hunt in their book: *Making Marriage Simple* that creates safe space in conversations to communicate about a desired behavioral shift with another person from a place of healthy sender responsibility and compassionate receiver responsibility.

* “What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.” – James 4:1-3
* Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. So, he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.” So, he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a sinner. But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.” Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” – Luke 19: 1-10
* “You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans?” – 1 Corinthians 3:3
* “A patient man calms a quarrel.” – Proverbs 15:18
* “He who loves a quarrel loves sin.” Proverbs 17:19
* “Every fool is quick to quarrel.” Proverbs 20:3
* “Without gossip a quarrel dies down.” Proverbs 26:20
* “The Lord’s servant’s must not quarrel.” 2 Timothy 2:24
* “Be gentle and considerate.” 1 Timothy 3:3
* “Pride only breeds quarrels.” Proverbs 13:10

Where do you go when you feel judged and criticized? Do you reach out to your friends and slander the person for judging you? This is a very common response because we feel hurt and misunderstood. Jesus drew people into repentance (sincere regret or remorse) through the archway of love and acceptance of where the person was at in the moment. Consider Zacchaeus, Jesus went into his house with his friends and ate his food at his table without any accusations or power struggle. It was in the experience of profound love in the midst of Zacchaeus’ transgressions (to step aside or over the boundaries God has set for us) that led to his conversion (to stop, change and pivot into a godly life).

* "'Do not go about spreading slander among your people. "'Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor's life. I am the LORD.” Leviticus 19:16
* “He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness, and speaks truth in his heart. He does not slander with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach (address someone in a way to express disapproval or disappointment) against his friend.” Psalm 15:2-3
* “Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” Ephesians 4:31-32
* “…speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.” Titus 3:2
* “when we are slandered we answer kindly.” 1 Corinthians 4:13
* “Do not judge and criticize and condemn others, so that you may not be judged, criticized and condemned yourselves.” Matthew 7:1
* “You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God’s judgment seat.” Romans 14:10
* “Therefore, judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time, each will receive their praise from God.” 1 Corinthians 4:5
* “There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you--who are you to judge your neighbor?” James 4:12

Identify & Integrate:

Re-read the above verses. Identify 3 scriptures that speak directly to you. *“Holy Spirit as I read through the scriptures above help me to be thoughtfully attentive to the opportunity to rid myself of judgments that lead to quarrels and slanderous talk. Help me to remember that I am here as your ambassador and you are making your appeal for love and salvation in the world through me, may my words, thoughts, deeds and actions reflect your appeal not mine.”* Write those scriptures down and pray them into your life.

* When was the last time I experienced a power struggle in a conversation (competed for control in a specific conversation) How did I handle this? How would I have wanted to handle it?
* What aspect of a power struggle do I identify with? The need to be right? Liked or understood?
* Do I slander other people when I feel judged or criticized by them?
* How do I respond when I find myself in a conversation where the receiver of my information has a different stance or perspective?

Maintain:

As mentioned earlier, Harville Hendrix and Helen Hunt have created a safe protocol that supports safety and connection in the midst of conflict that is a worthy practice to reduce the power struggle in relationships: *Making Marriage Simple, 2013, pp 96-97.* Explore the following Behavior Change Request technique the next time you find yourself face to face with behavior that does not honor the relationship you care about:

1. Choose a specific frustration you have experienced with someone you care about and ask if this is a good time: “I’d love to talk with you about a request I have is now a good time?”
2. In as few words as possible simply state your frustration, avoid dumping. The receiver can then practice IMAGO dialogue: **Mirroring/Summary:** Mirror each thing whomever you’re in conversation with says – then ask is there more? If they say no, move along into your summary statement.

**Validation:** Make a statement something like: “The thing that makes sense to me is ... show that you can put yourself in their shoes: “It makes sense to me that when I said that to you, you felt like I was criticizing you and that hurt.” This is so important because too often we feel in dialogue we don’t make sense this step allows for validation: “You make sense.” Too often one person shares their point of view and you say yours and miss out on validating each other.

**Make a Statement of Empathy:** I imagine when this happens you feel hurt or angry … Did I get that? Is this how you felt? Let the receiver of our communication know we understand how they feel. Empathy is too often left behind in the dust of unbridled ambition and the power struggle.

1. The SMART Request (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-limited). Once the receiver mirrors, validates and empathizes with the sender, the sender feels understood and acknowledged, the receiver then asks for 3 requests and the sender answers clearly and specifically with 3 things that would help: Receiver: How can I help relieve your frustration?

The sender then states three things (ask for things that would be fun for you to receive and also fun for your partner to give) that could address the issue. Allow the receiver to pick the one that feels light and easy to implement.

*Dear God, thank you for the opportunity to identify and adjust my role in power plays to better align with the person you have called me to be in this world: salt (love) and light to the world. Forgive me for forgetting at times that I am safe in you always and that you have given me the ability to speak the truth in love and compassion along with offering respect and love in the midst of different perspectives and beliefs. Nothing good has ever come out of a power struggle and nothing thrives in a state of war. All things beautiful have been achieved by those who dared to believe the best in others, which was the very position that led you to proclaim in the midst of criticism, stone throwing and judgements: “Father forgive them, they know not what they do.” Help me to release all judgement and criticism towards myself and others and step into kind, gentle and compassionate conversations knowing that I am safe with you.*

**Surround yourself with people who make you a better person in life**