



How to Compromise



THE CHALLENGE

You and your spouse have different preferences on something. Realistically, you have at least three options:

1. You could stubbornly **insist** until you get your way.
2. You could passively **surrender** to your spouse's wishes.
3. Both of you could **compromise**.

'But I don't like the idea of compromise,' you might say. 'It sounds as if *neither* of us will get what we want!'

Be assured that compromise need not be a lose-lose proposition—not if you do it right. But before considering *how* to compromise, there are a few things you should know about this vital skill.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

Compromise requires teamwork. Before marriage, you might have been accustomed to making unilateral decisions. Now things have changed, and both you and your spouse must put your marriage above your personal preferences. Rather than think of that as a drawback, consider the advantage. "The ideas of two people combined can lead to a solution that is better than what each one could come up with alone," says a wife named Alexandra.

Compromise requires an open mind. "You don't have to agree with everything your spouse says or believes, but you have to be honestly open to *considering* his or her position," writes marriage counselor John M. Gottman. "If you find yourself sitting with your arms folded and shaking your head no (or just thinking it) when your spouse is trying to talk out a problem with you, your discussion will never get anywhere."^{*}

Compromise requires self-sacrifice. No one enjoys living with a spouse who believes "it's either my way or the highway." It is far better when both partners have a self-sacrificing disposition. "There are times when I yield to my husband to make him happy, but at times he does the same for me," says a wife named June. "That's what marriage should be about—give and take, not just take."

^{*} From the book *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*.



WHAT YOU CAN DO

Start right. The tone in which a discussion begins is often the tone in which it ends. If you start with harsh words, the chances of reaching a peaceful compromise are slim. So follow the Bible's advice: "Clothe yourselves with . . . compassion, kindness, humility, mildness, and patience." (Colossians 3:12) Such qualities will help you and your spouse to avoid arguing and get down to the work of problem solving.—*Bible principle: Colossians 4:6.*

Search for common ground. If your attempts at compromise only escalate into heated arguments, it may be that you and your spouse are focusing too much on where your views *differ*. Instead, pinpoint where they *agree*. To help you find common ground, try this:

Each of you make a two-column list. In the first column, write down which aspects of the issue you feel most strongly about. In the second column, list the aspects on which you feel that you could compromise. Then discuss your lists together. You might find that the aspects that you both feel strongest about are not really all that incompatible. If so, compromise should not be too difficult. Even if they *are* incompatible, having all aspects of the matter on paper will help you and your spouse to see the issue more clearly.

Brainstorm. Some issues may be relatively easy to settle. With more complex issues, however, a husband and wife can strengthen their bond by brainstorming a solution that perhaps neither of them would have come up with alone.—*Bible principle: Ecclesiastes 4:9.*

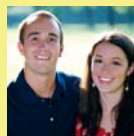
Be willing to adjust your view. The Bible says: "Each one of you must love his wife as he does himself; on the other hand, the wife should have deep respect for her husband." (Ephesians 5:33) When love and respect flow freely, both spouses are willing to consider the other's viewpoint—and even be swayed. A husband named Cameron says, "There are things you would rather not do but—thanks to the influence of your spouse—you later come to love."—*Bible principle: Genesis 2:18.* ■

KEY SCRIPTURES

"Let your words always be gracious, seasoned with salt."
—Colossians 4:6.

"Two are better than one."
—Ecclesiastes 4:9.

"It is not good for the man to continue to be alone. I am going to make a helper for him, as a complement of him."—Genesis 2:18.



**CAMERON AND
DANITRIA**

"If you were to do all the things *you* want and not listen to your spouse or give your spouse a chance to express another view, you would be living as if you were still single."



**BRAD AND
KARLEE**

"Both partners should feel that they have been heard and have had a part in the decision-making process. That kind of compromise builds a 'team' atmosphere rather than a power struggle."