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PERSONAL NOTE FROM WINNIS

James and I are celebrating our 43rd anniversary this month! We have come a long way, considering the fact that we got married after only three months of dating.

It was Spring 1975 at Cal (U.C. Berkeley). I was a college student from Hong Kong and James was in graduate school. We met in a digital design class in EECS (Electrical Engineering and Computer Science).



Dating was easy. Long before we heard of the 5 Love Languages from Gary Chapman, we were filling each other's love tank effortlessly. James spent plenty of "Quality Time" with me; and I appreciated his words and actions with many "Words of Affirmations." Loving one another, we did not have to argue or defend ourselves.

It did not even matter that we had to communicate in English instead of his Mandarin or my Cantonese. Somehow the pressure, stress and loneliness we previously felt in a foreign land all faded away.

A month or so after seeing each other almost every day, James proposed on the phone.

"If everything turns out fine, I would like to marry you."

"But I don't know how to cook!"

"No problem. We can eat out every day."

I expected to live happily ever after. Therefore, I was disillusioned and hurt when James asked why I squeezed his toothpaste the wrong way – from the middle of the tube. Things went downhill and our honeymoon was over before long.

But there is hope in Christ! As written in the feature article this month, there are ways to **"Turn Relational Conflicts into Blessings"** when couples are willing to handle conflicts constructively.

Fast forward to earlier this week, we walked up the hills together, hand in hand, to celebrate life.



The Chinese article “Holding Hands” ([中文文章 - 牽手](#)) is our love story.

I will never forget my first impression of his parents when we met for dinner in San Francisco Chinatown. His mom and dad were over fifty years old, but they were still holding hands and talking with each other while walking towards their 4 children and me. It was right then and there that I knew I wanted a love just like that!

Marriage is not easy. James and I have gone through many ups and downs. Thank God that we are still talking, holding hands, and walking together. What a journey we have traveled as a couple, parents, grandparents, and co-laborers in Christ in spite of our differences. Glory to God!

結婚週年快樂 Happy Anniversary James!

Joy and Peace to you,
Winnis

FEATURED ARTICLE

Turn Relational Conflicts into Blessings

Conflict is as natural to the human experience as thunderstorms are to springtime. When left unchecked, conflict can generate heat and discomfort, disrupt interactions and destroy relationships. Between a couple, discord can lead to divorce. Between countries, hostilities can lead to war.

But when differences are openly acknowledged and addressed, conflict can be a powerful source of energy and lead to creative solutions that encourage growth, deepen intimacy and strengthen bonds between people.

The world is made up of individuals with different ideas, wants, needs and beliefs, and conflict may occur when our differences meet. Like so many other aspects of human interaction, it's how we deal with controversy that affects our relationships – with others and ourselves.

Psychologist Dr. Wei-Jen Huang said, "Facts seldom cause conflicts. It's each person's value system, point of view, perspective, and interpretation about such facts that produce conflicts."

Some relationships appear to be without conflict. This can mean that everyone is in tune with everyone else. But what's more likely is that some people are not being honest and real with others, or that some individuals regularly

routinely, and reluctantly accept things from others without protest. This is true with a couple, in a family, or in any group. When conflict appears to be totally absent, it is best to take a look under the carpet.

For some, the inability to face conflict comes from old, deeply imbedded fears, such as the fear of being wounded or absorbed by another. Or some may fear that there is no resolution to the disagreement. In avoiding conflict, individuals may lose themselves in a forest of fears where no one says what they truly feel or want or believe.

Without resolution, conflict converts to stress that causes all sorts of ills and disease and may ultimately release itself in explosions of rage, withdrawal, acting out, addictions and general unhappiness.

However, with resolution comes the release of fear and tension, clarity and remarkably creative solutions or ideas. A feeling of closeness may result or, at the very least, there is a deeper understanding, acceptance and respect for one another.

If you are reluctant to engage in conflict resolution, consider the following:

- Because people are different, conflict is natural.
- It's more important to find clarity and unity than to be right.
- No one is right in God's eyes; outside of Christ, we are all fallen creatures (Romans 3:23); and

it is God who made us different and unique (Psalm 139).

- Conflict is about speaking up and telling our truth (what seems so real and true to us).
- Conflict is about being open and honest with others.
- There is usually a win-win-win solution somewhere. This solution can only be formed in Christ.
- Resolving conflict keeps us from living in fear.
- Resolving conflict helps us clarify, sort and value our differences.
- Resolving conflict can bring us closer together.
- Resolving conflict is being respectful of ourselves and others.

Guidelines to Resolving Stress in Your Relationship

Resolving conflict is a commitment to clarity, to listening with an open mind and an open heart, and to respecting and valuing one another and our differences. Following are some guidelines for working through conflicts. In some instances, it may be helpful to have a third person to help guide you through the process.

1. Agree that no one will leave the discussion and that each person will be respectful.

Commit to stay with the process until you reach an agreed-upon solution. If you need to take a break, agree on a time to resume.

2. Have each person name the problem or conflict and describe feelings, thoughts and needs. Be as specific as possible. Take turns to listen actively without being defensive.

3. Each of you has contributed to your unpleasant and unhealthy interactions. Own

your part in creating (or maintaining) the conflict or problem. Make a list of past attempts that were not successful in resolving the issue.

4. **Take time for silent reflection.** During this time, allow each person time to reflect and consider each aspect of the concern. Affirm that there is a way to come to resolution. From this place of silence, tell each other any thoughts, concerns or considerations that arise. Brainstorm solutions with an open mind. Do not judge or criticize any suggestion until all ideas are on the table.

5. **Discuss and evaluate each possible solution.** Stay with the issue until a resolution emerges. Allow for all the time it takes. Pick one solution that both of you want to try (with specific actions from each person). If you can't find a resolution, you may need to accept that you disagree, or get professional help to continue working toward resolution. In any case, set up another time to review and discuss your progress.

Because conflict is natural to the human experience, the best way to deal with it is to create the kind of connections in which differences are acknowledged and supported as part of the ongoing and spirited process of being in a relationship.

We all want to be understood and accepted. Let's not forget who we are in Christ.

“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (Matthew 26:41).

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CHINESE ARTICLE

牽手 蔣吳蘊蘭 (2018年7月更新)

原載於2009年12月《神國雜誌》KRC第18期的聖誕特刊

那年我在加州柏克萊大學念電機電腦工程。上某堂課的頭一天，龐大的演講廳、一排排階梯坐得滿滿，靠近左側門的我忙著抄筆記。忽然，右邊側門打開，有位黃皮膚、黑頭

髮的東方人進來，目中無人地從教室右邊走到左邊，再上三級臺階，越過幾個同學，在惟一的空位坐下。濃髮過耳，乾淨方正的臉，咖啡、黃、白三色花襯衫，白色喇叭褲。究竟是男？是女？

下課鈴響，同學T君從後面追上，問分組做項目的事。忽然，剛才那位老兄走近。原來，是T君朋友的哥哥，即將碩士畢業。這就是我與你的初次邂逅。

四人小組成立，初次相約在你住的宿舍大廳討論。忽然，有位長髮女孩翩然走來擁抱你，我心一沈。幸虧，她只是你姊姊。項目完成，期末考剛過，你就正式和我約會。

婚姻是戀愛的墳墓？

那年，我從香港來美國才兩年，留學生活很孤單。你則十五歲就從台灣移民到美國，不僅像美國通，還有有父母家人。你關心我、尊重我、傾聽我不甚流暢的英語。每天來電話，出入接送，請我吃飯，遊覽灣區名勝，還借中文雜誌、瓊瑤小說給我讀。尤記得頭一次在餐館外面見到你父母，五十多歲的兩人牽手而來，多麼令人嚮往！我對婚姻的信心，頓時增加不少。

畢業後，你找到全職工作，快要聚少離多。有一天，你在電話中冒出一句：「假若凡事順利，我想娶你。」我順口回答：「我可不會煮東西喔！」你說：「沒問題，可以每天上館子。」

婚後我倆搬進你上班地點附近的小公寓，有了自己的小天地！不善烹飪的我，每天預備美式早餐，三文治午餐，還花幾個鐘點弄我那幾味「拿手」中國菜。

有一晚，我鼓起勇氣：「好吃嗎？」

你的靜默讓我吃驚。半晌終於開口：「好...吃。但可否多換一些口味？」

不夠好嗎？不是說不用煮嗎？我的心掉到谷底，眼淚往肚裡流。怪不得媽媽常說：「婚姻是戀愛的墳墓，男人都不可靠。」

難道你忘了？我在傳統重男輕女的環境下長大，祖母不滿意媽媽連生兩個女兒，後來爸

爸有了外遇生下私生子而且納妾。為了替媽媽爭氣，我這老二發憤圖強，獨立、不服輸、凡事靠自己、不倚靠別人，直至遇見你。

次年三月，我大學畢業，成為軟件工程師。我們都拚命賺錢，在職場上步步高升，夫妻感情卻愈加疏遠。

上帝作為太奇妙

幾年後兒子的誕生，本是美事，卻成危機，我們常為教養獨生子而意見不合。在公司我得人敬重，一回家就覺得無用。每次帶兒子買玩具回來，你嚴肅的臉就像在控訴我浪費、寵孩子。等不及你開口，我便先發制人：「錢是我賺的，喜歡怎麼花就怎麼花！」

你一貫冷靜對待，避開衝突。愈不吭聲，我聲音就愈大，如此惡性循環。為了證明自己的價值，我竟變成「矽谷工作狂」。午夜夢迴，覺得人生沒意義。結婚已十三年，兒子也快六歲了，難道除了離婚，別無他法？

感謝上帝！在絕望中，我遇到救主耶穌，1989年歸入基督名下。祂無條件的愛解開我「被人欺侮」的心結，醫治我的焦慮和懼怕，我興奮地每週數次參加聚會。幾個月後，你很嚴肅地跟我攤牌：「你說得救，我不管你。你從前跑公司，現在還跑教會，根本不理我和兒子。從前是工作狂，現在是教會狂！.....」

你早已預備跟我大吵一頓。不料，我絲毫沒打岔，耐心聽你說完後含著淚說：「你說的對。我沒有顧念你們的需要，實在太自私了。令你氣忿、失望，我真的對不起你們，求你原諒。」如此，我們又重新溝通。

當我順服上帝，改變自己，用同理心去了解、接納和尊重你，才發覺你一直默默地愛著我。為了保護我免入邪教，你陪我到教會；為了弄清楚我信什麼，你把聖經從頭到尾讀一遍。你和兒子很快相繼成為基督徒，讓我看到上帝的作為是何等奇妙！

不武裝自己，不避開衝突，用同理心傾聽，分享彼此的觀察、想法、感受、需要和心願，讓我倆更為親密，身教也成為兒子的祝福。你支持我在 1995 年放棄主管職位，做了全職媽媽。數月後還鼓勵我到神學院進修，結果 1998 年畢業，實習後 2003 年成為加州婚姻家庭治療師。2005 年我創辦的 Parenting ABC，還是你取的名字呢！

上帝的愛，改變我倆的一生。轉眼已結婚四十三年，兒子與媳婦已經生了兩男兩女。誰能預測到我倆會成為牧師與師母呢？

哥林多後書 5:17 「若有人在基督裡，他就是新造的人，舊事已過，都變成新的了。」

一路走來，有高山，有低谷，年過六十了，還是心連心、手牽手。

ABOUT WINNIS CHIANG

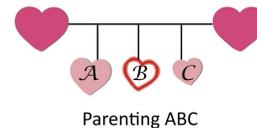


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美國孩子，中國爹娘



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