

## CREW Bible Study

### Youth XP3 Message – Defining the Win in Arguing

- **BOTTOM LINE:** People matter more than the argument.
- **GOAL:** To help students understand that the real “win” in an argument is to preserve the relationship with the other person, even if we disagree with them, and that the argument doesn’t have value but the person does.
- **SCRIPTURE:**
  - *My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry. – James 1:19*

#### MESSAGE

Do you enjoy a good argument? Or do you try and avoid it at all costs? When it comes to arguing, what’s your style?

- Do you amp up the volume and intensity? You talk louder, and maybe faster, than they do in order to drown out what they are saying.
- Do you subtly change the subject mid-argument until the whole conversation is about something else?
- Are you the passive aggressive type? You make snide comments that might appear harmless, but you know there’s more meaning behind them that cuts deep.
- Do you go silent? You don’t say anything, but the look on your face says it all.
- Or do you become like a turtle? You back yourself into a shell and refuse to engage.

We are right in the middle of a time when tensions are high and conflict has become, well, almost normal. In fact, conflict feels constant in our culture today.

- Conflict over what to do about school, virtual or in-person, when and where, and how.
- Conflict over how to manage COVID and the rules in place for it.
- Conflict in politics over who *will* win the election and who *should* win the election.
- Conflict over what people should do about guns, or drugs, or immigration, or women’s rights, or the Black Lives Matter movement.

When the world around us is in constant conflict, most people tend to feel one of three things. You feel angry and fight to change the opinion of the other side. You feel torn in the middle and don’t know which side to be on. Or you don’t really care either way and try to stay out of it.

But when we *do* get involved in an argument, we all just want one thing. Can you guess what it is? To win. Whether we are FOR something or AGAINST it, if we engage in the argument, we're in it to win it.

But here's a question for you: In a time with so many unavoidable arguments happening around us, how do we define the win? The answer might be different than what you think.

To help us figure this out, we're going to look at a passage from the book of James, who was the brother of Jesus. What makes James so interesting is that he didn't grow up thinking that Jesus was the Son of God and worshiping him because of it. James grew up thinking that Jesus was just his older brother. Nothing special about that, right? Well, now we know better!

When Jesus left home and started teaching in the Judean countryside and traveling to share messages about what God was like, what did James do? He stayed away! James had little interest in knowing what his older brother was up to or why. Can you relate to that in some way? Have you ever been completely disinterested in what your brother or sister was doing? It seems that the relationship between James and Jesus wasn't too different from sibling relationships right now. And because of that, we can imagine they must have had some arguments as they were growing up together.

James has something really good to say about conflict, tension, and convincing others that you're right. In James chapter 1, verse 19, he says this.....

*My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.*

James probably did what most of us have done with our siblings – reacting to them by being *quick* to *speak* and *slow* to *listen*. Not the other way around!

From what we read in the Gospels, James wasn't super supportive of what Jesus was doing. That is, until James realized he had been wrong about all of it. When James *did* take time to listen, James began to see something he didn't see before. His brother wasn't acting like God, He *was* God - in a body. He *was* who He claimed to be. When James changed his mind about Jesus and saw Him for who He really was, it put everything else into perspective.

We all know what it's like to be quick to speak and quick to become angry. Think back to the last argument you had. What was it about? Whatever it was, is it still that important to you? Maybe, maybe not? But do you know what is important? The person or people you were arguing with. That person matters. People matter. Whether you agree with them or not. Often, the people we are fighting or arguing with will matter far longer than the thing we're fighting about.

Controlling our reactions makes us better humans. But as humans, it's not easy to do. Here's three things to help you:

1. **Memorize what James said.** If we want to respond to arguments and conflict in a strategically positive way, we need a strategy. Just like song lyrics, when you memorize Scripture, it gets in your head and helps you think differently. And there's no better time to think differently than right now with all the conflict around us. So, memorize what James said as a strategy for arguing, "Be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry." (James 1:19)
2. **Put yourself on pause.** If you want to be "slow to speak", you can't react instantaneously. Put yourself on pause. Even if it's just for a few seconds. Pause and ask God to help you see more of this person, more of these people, and more of the situation. What is making this person or these people react this way and what is making you want to react as well? And that leads me to....
3. **Empathize.** Empathy is what happens when you put yourself in the other person's shoes. Whoever you disagree with usually has more to their story than you know. There's more to their emotions or beliefs, but it's hard to remember that if we don't pause and listen to their story before responding. Try challenging yourself not to respond until you've thought about it long enough that you can clearly state how they feel in a way that they would agree with. Usually, if you talk about the issue from their point of view, you can empathize, even if you still disagree.

You may not be able to change the way other people behave when it comes to conflict, arguing, or fighting, but you *can* change how *you* behave in those situations. Here's something to remember: It's not about winning the argument, it's about winning the relationship. It's about making the other person realize that their relationship with you matters more than their disagreement with you. Why? Because people matter.

### **FAMILY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. What's the dumbest argument you've ever had? What made it a dumb argument?
2. What is your style when it comes to arguments?
  - a. You talk louder, and maybe faster, than they do in order to drown out what they are saying.
  - b. You subtly change the subject mid-argument until the whole conversation is about something else.
  - c. You make snide comments that appear harmless, but you know they cut deep.
  - d. You don't say anything, but the look on your face says it all.

- e. You become like a turtle, back yourself into a shell and refuse to engage.
3. Who do you get into the most arguments with? Why do you think there are some people you argue with more than others?
4. How have you seen your style of arguing affect relationships with people? Have you lost a friendship because of it?
5. Read James 1:19. Do any of these three statements come naturally to you? Which one(s)?
6. Describe a time when you did the opposite of what James suggests and were quick to speak and slow to listen. How did that turn out?
7. What's the difference between being slow to anger and letting people walk all over you?
8. Think about the last argument you had and how it affected your relationship with that person. What would you change about how it went if the goal were to preserve the relationship?
9. What does a healthy relationship look like after an argument?
10. What does the phrase "people matter" mean to you?
11. Today, ask God to help you empathize with the people you disagree with. Ask Him to help you recognize their point of view.