



# The Price of Being Right

by Linda Canup

It was our first year of marriage and we were having a normal, newlywed argument. I stayed calm and listened to my husband's argument. Then I tried to find a solution to our conflict. I tried reason. I tried empathy. I tried to "express my feelings." I tried every single tactic I could fathom.

Then I shouted until my throat hurt. I threw things. Words came

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out of my mouth you'd never imagine were in a pastor's wife's vocabulary. He wasn't listening, and I wanted to beat my point into his head.

My husband looked at me like he'd never seen me before. "You need to repent—who *are* you?" he asked. I began to cry uncontrollably—with loud, suffocating sobs.

I didn't know this person who blew up so violently. I'd never, in all

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the years of my life, been so angry before—not even in the worst of my teen years. My brother and I never saw an argument half as heated. My parents didn't fight like us. It felt

foreign to me and I hated it. But I didn't know what else to do.

## Looking for an Answer

I desperately searched Scripture for hope. I wanted "five tips for controlling uncontrollable rage." But all I found were passages that made me feel worse. "Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger" (Ephesians 4:26, ESV), and "...be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry" (James 1:19). How could I "turn the other cheek" (see Luke 6:29) when all I wanted was to smack some sense into his?

I needed my husband to say "I understand your point," but all his choleric personality would consent to was: "We'd be fine if you would just see it my way." It was enough to frustrate the sanity out of anyone, but it didn't deserve violence.

I wanted help, but I didn't have the nerve to ask for it. You don't hear of women having severe anger issues. It was embarrassing enough to admit it to myself, and I couldn't divulge my secret to anyone else. So, I turned to the next best thing in my opinion—books.

In his book, *The Anger Trap*, Dr. Les Carter says, "Those who use aggressive anger often have a truly valid message to communicate.

Their method of delivery, however, can be so foul that the reasonableness of the message is completely lost." He then explains how correctly handling anger is more important than actually being right or wrong.

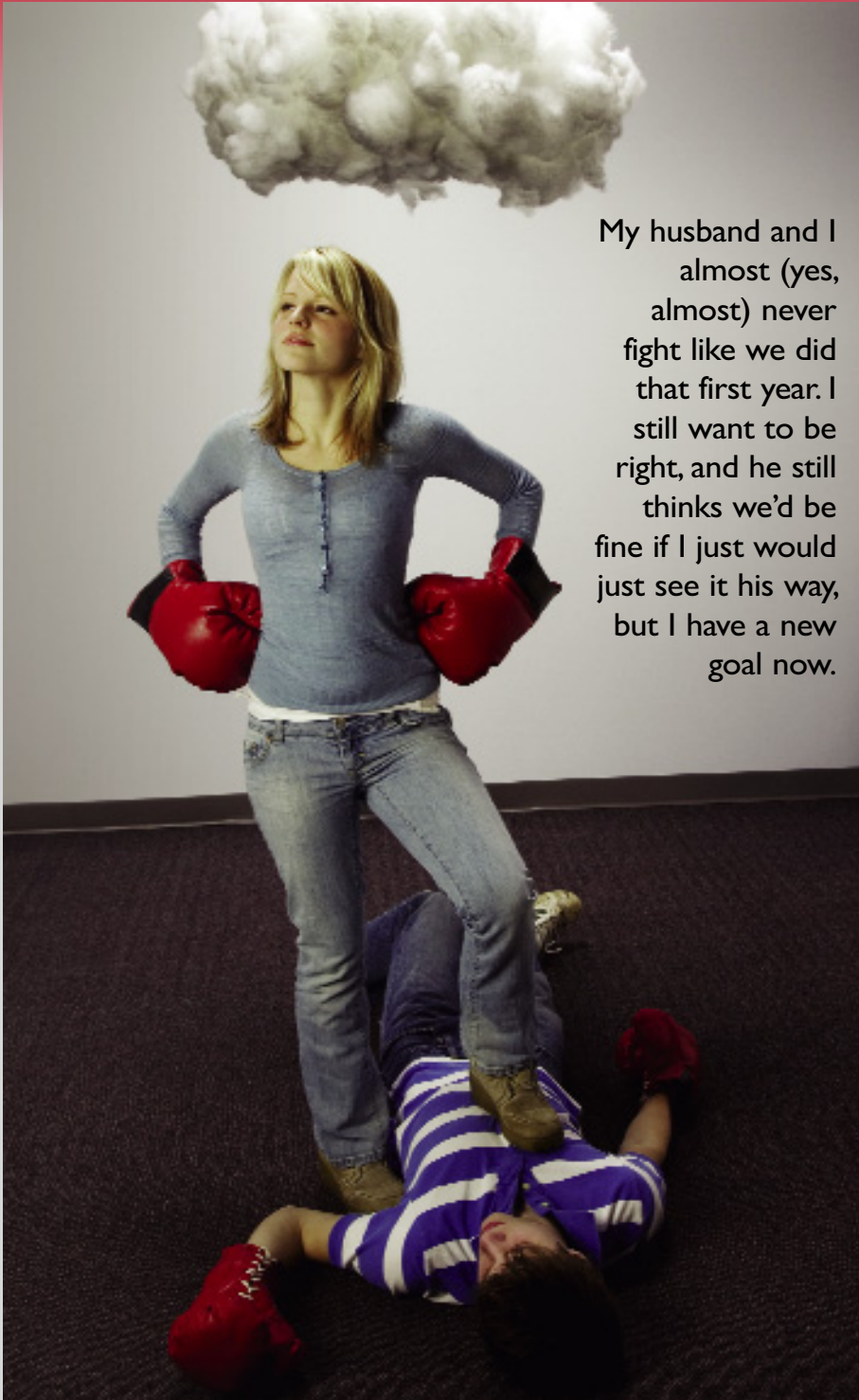
So, being *right* wasn't the point? It was a simple concept, but one I had never considered or tried to live out before. It hit me like a ton of bricks. All my life, being right always won out. When I wanted to quit piano lessons as a teenager, I presented my case to my parents, and while they were greatly disappointed, they consented. During my school years, I wrote papers about why my argument was right regarding a given topic. Now everything I had learned was out the window.

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If resolving an argument wasn't about being right or finding the correct answer, then what was it about?

## Finding a Resolution

Many books and specialists give the impression that everything can be "solved" if both people would just work together. But sometimes that just doesn't happen. Maybe one person's not ready to give in, or insecurities continually cause a spouse to act defensively. The reality is that



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a particular argument might never be completely resolved—and *that's okay!* Despite what your premarital counselor says, you can stay married even if you don't have "closure" on every issue before bedtime.

On a very basic level, living with unfinished arguments is about hon-

oring our marriage commitments. It's about cherishing, regardless of who's right or wrong. You'll still fall short at times—God knows I have—but if we can start to see our spouses and our marriage relationships as more important than the things we fight about, then maybe we can make some progress.

Now, in practice, this won't be so easy. For instance, what does the wife who passionately disagrees with her husband about the state of the environment do when it comes to buying a new car, making home repairs or choosing a waste management company? What about the couple who can't agree on whether to send their child to public or private school? Somebody's going to have to concede—the child can't be split in half. How about politics? Can a couple support differing candidates without coming to blows?

It won't necessarily end the issue for the two of you, and it won't be fair—inevitably someone will have their way more often than the other—but the important thing will be that you found, and continue to find, a way through the unresolved issue together.

And if you don't? Then it's definitely time to seek out the professionals, if you haven't already. They'll have the tools for you to figure out your next step. But as a fellow Christian, I'll encourage you to not lose heart, for we can do many things through the power of Christ (Romans 8:37; Philippians 4:13). Thankfully for us, he's someone who honors the promises he makes to his bride, refusing to give up on her when she has unresolved conflicts with him. He extends mercy to his church, and hopefully we can do the same for one another.

My husband and I almost (yes, *almost*) never fight like we did that first year. I still want to be right, and he still thinks we'd be fine if I just would just see it his way, but I have a new goal now. When one of those old unresolved issues rears its ugly head, my goal is to make the best decision for our marriage—no matter who's right! □

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