

A little over a year ago, my son Chamblin decided to use sandpaper block to clean the dirt off one of the car doors on my wife's SUV. Needless to say, when I saw the scratches on the door, I was not happy. Fortunately, we were able to have the scratches buffed out. Brooke told me that we would look back on the experience one day and laugh.

I thought if we could look back on that experience and laugh, surely we could also laugh about the story I am about to tell. Brooke, however, told me not so much.

My wife had just completed a large fundraiser for a non-profit for which she worked. The event was a smashing success, but it had required a great deal of energy. Some ladies who had helped her with the fundraiser wanted to reward her with a pedicure.

Our boys were in Cuba, Missouri with their grandparents, and I was working from home, so it was a fine Saturday for her to celebrate the accomplishment. She had a 1:30 appointment.

That night, around 6:30, she was supposed to follow me in a separate vehicle to pick up my dad, stepmom, and another couple at the airport. Around 4:30, I noticed Brooke was not home. I am no expert on pedicures, but that seemed a bit extreme to me. I called her cell phone. No answer. I called it again. No answer.

I am getting worried. I call the cell again. No answer. Four more tries before she picks up, and by this point I am angry.

She was in the Central West End with her friends, and they had decided after the pedicure to listen to live music and share some appetizers on an outside patio. As a result of the noise, she did not hear her phone ringing. She could not understand why I was so upset.

On the other hand, I could not understand why she did not text or call to tell me what they were doing and when she would be home.

I was not kind in my tone of voice on the phone. I was not kind when she walked through the front door, either.

I wanted an apology. In my mind, I deserved an apology. Only she did not think she did anything wrong and that I was the one who should apologize for my rude, unreasonable behavior.

I will come back to this account later, but who among us has not encountered conflict in our marriages, with our children, among our friends, in the church, and in our general dealings with other people?

Conflict rages whenever there is a lack of common understanding, poor communication, unclear or unfair expectations, power plays, or hurt feelings.

When conflict emerges in various areas of our lives, two options thus exist. We can strive to resolve the conflict rationally and effectively, or we can participate in poor conflict management.