



Meredith Brock: Well, hello everyone. Thanks so much for tuning in to the Proverbs 31 Ministries Podcast, where we share biblical Truth for any girl in any season. I'm your host Meredith Brock. And I am here with my co-host, Kaley Olson.

Kaley Olson: Well, hi Meredith. And we've got a great teaching to share with our listeners today, from our friend, Lisa Allen. She is no stranger to the podcast as many of our listeners have heard from her as a guest co-host, she's even taught before, but she's also a wealth of wisdom when it comes leadership development and coaching. So she's here on the show today in the teacher's seat to share an insightful perspective on the four conflict personality styles that will help us as we enter into our next hard conversations. It's a really, really great and practical teaching. I'm so excited for people to listen too.

MB: Me too, Kaley. This episode really is a good one, and we know you're going to get so much out of it. So to help you dig deeper, we want to let you know, we've actually included a free downloadable resource called, "A Guide to Tough Conversations." It's available to you in our show notes at proverbs31.org/listen. Don't forget to check out that resource and let it be a tool you refer to anytime you're headed into one of those tough conversations.

KO: Absolutely.

MB: All right, friends here is our conversation with Lisa Allen.

KO: Well, we are so excited to have our friend and our coworker, Lisa Allen, on the show with us today. Lisa has been a guest co-host several times on the podcast. And so I'm sure y'all are familiar with her and her voice and her insight that she gives every time that she does that. But did you guys also know that she's a wealth of knowledge in the leadership coaching world? I think it's so cool. And that's what she does here for us at Proverbs 31, a part of a lot of different things that she does for us here at Proverb 31 every day. And we're so thankful for her leadership.

MB: Yeah. And let's be honest, you might hear the word leadership coach and immediately go to an actual coach in your mind, and you're thinking of someone blowing a whistle and yelling at you and saying, *give me 20*. So before we let her dive into her teaching. Lisa, tell us what in the world it means to be a leadership coach? Unpack that for our listeners.

Lisa Allen: Well, it's similar to a coach in that I come alongside of people and help motivate them, but I always describe what I do with three Cs. I come alongside of you and I help you build confidence, confidence in who God created you to be, your wiring. We'll hear a little bit about that today. The

second C is calling, helping you identify your kingdom purpose here on this earth. And then capacity, creating a life that has capacity for you to steward yourself on behalf of God and do your kingdom calling.

KO: That's awesome. That's awesome. I love that when we bring people onto the show at Proverbs 31, a lot of times it's, of course, we'll bring teachers on the show who are speaking from the platform to give a message that's biblically based and not saying that isn't biblically based at all, but I just love how we're able to tap into your gifting, Lisa; that God is giving you to coach people and bring you on the show today to talk through something that is very biblically based that needs to be addressed. And you're actually on the show to present biblical ways to handle conflict management. And let's be honest, if you're reading today, like we all are, then you're likely going to face some type of conflict this week, or maybe even today, especially if you're listening on your way to work or somewhere, and it's early in the morning. And so as believers, there's a lot riding on how we manage conflict, especially when others are watching. And so Lisa, we're excited to learn from you in our time together today.

LA: Well, thank you. I'm excited too, we all face it. Don't we? No matter where you are, you're going to face it. So today I want to talk to you about guiding you through tough conversations and healthy conflict by introducing you to four common conflict companions you'll encounter based on the four basic personality styles. So where do we go as we start? Why is this important? Why always start with God's Word, to say, what is it about understanding people and the conflict I'm going to face? And so He led me to Proverbs Chapter 15 and specifically versus two, four, five and seven. And I pulled them out in the New Living Translation. And I'll tell you why in a second after I read it. *"A gentle answer deflects anger, but harsh words make tempers flare. The tongue of the wise makes knowledge appealing, but the mouth of the fool belches out foolishness. Gentle words are a tree of life, a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit. Only a fool despises a parent's discipline; whoever learns from correction is wise. The lips of the wise give good advice; the heart of the fool has none to give."*

So guys, how can we harness the best of these verses to be a general deflector that quiets tempers? Who doesn't want to do that today? Use my voice to make knowledge appealing without belching foolishness. That's exactly why I chose the New Living Translation. That is so graphic. I want to make my voice be knowledge that's appealing. How can I keep my words truthful without crushing a spirit, and open my mouth with wise and good advice without engaging my foolish heart? So I know on a previous Proverbs podcast, we had a guide to tough conversations, and I know you're going to link that here. It has so much about creating space and preparing for tough conversations.

So I know we'll link that, but I want to start with sharing a few ways to meet the needs of others while you're in conflict, and at the same time, not deny your own needs. So as you get to know our four conflict opinions, keep in mind this truth: That it's easier to pave the way for healthy conflict when you're consistently creating trust in your relationships and putting chips in each other's banks. So those of us that are parents, there's a parenting philosophy that says it's easier to make a withdrawal from your kids' bank to discipline them, or instruct them if they're coming from place of being very full, and the same is true for us. So if you already have tips in the bank of any relationship, it will help you when you need to have conflict and you will need to have conflict because any healthy relationship benefits from healthy conflict.

So be intentional about pouring into relationships enough with listening, serving, affirming, uplifting, so that there is room for conflict when it happens. I always like to say, *don't Oreo your people*. In other words, there's a concept for conflict from years ago that said, *you tell them something you really like about them, and then you tell them what you're upset about* —that's the middle of the Oreo — *and then*

you tell them something you like about them again. So it might look like this, oh, you're such a godly friend, but I wish you weren't so scattered and forgetful about your commitments, but you're a great sister in Christ. I really want to look to find a way to build relationships that don't need an Oreo. So as we kick off, remember conflict isn't bad, it's unhealthy conflict that's damaging.

So as we begin, let's talk about the concept of self-awareness. For sure, we need to have self-awareness for any tough conversation that we have to have. And by definition self-awareness means conscious knowledge of one's own character, feelings, motives and desire. So if we want to have strategic and meaningful conflict, it's important that we take that one step further. Yes, being self-aware is knowing yourself, but the next step is knowing yourself in the context of a situation, or your conflict companions personality needs. So let me give you an example of that guys, you guys know me, I am a verbal processor. I love the sound of my own voice. This is self-awareness. So if I walk into every potentially tense discussion expecting the ability to go on and on without noticing, for example, that my husband needs me to be more direct, or he gets worn out completely when I overprocess, then what good is it for me to only know about my own needs?

You see, complete full circle self-awareness is knowing myself in the context of how to best to communicate with my husband based on his wiring as well. And so this is why knowing these four conflict companions that you'll meet is really important. It will guide you in understanding your conflict style, but it will take the next step to understand another person's conflict style and how they impact each other. So full disclaimer, guys, this is a dance, it's a give and a take. It can't always be me bending to another other style, nor can it always be them bending to mine. So as we talk about our four conflict companions, I want you to keep two questions in the back of your head as a lens to look through. The first question as you hear about these companions is ask yourself, who am I? This is helping me know myself.

And so who am I in conflict? And what do I need in conflict? And how do I complicate, or become unhealthy in conflict? So that's the first part, who am I? And then the second part is, who am I alongside of them? Who am I in the context of what they need? What does this situation require of me? So here's our four conflict companions, I'll name all of them and then we'll jump in and unpack each of them. We're going to see dominant Debbie, expressive Ellie, perfect Polly and compliant Connie. Now we run into all four of these personality styles in most personality assessments that you may have taken, the enneagram, DISC, StrengthsFinders, Myers-Brigg, even spiritual gift assessments have clues to all of these styles. So let's jump in and meet dominant Debbie.

Dominant Debbie is assertive by nature, she can be demanding and she prefers tasks, she's very, a task oriented. She's probably the D on DISC, and she would be maybe the eight or the one on the enneagram. So the first thing to know about dominant Debbie is they enjoy a great debate. Now my husband has the dominant personality and whenever we go into a social setting, I'm always aware that he might just randomly throw out a comment about maybe something, a current administration, or a past administration or something that's politically charged, not so much, because he's trying to stir things up, but he just enjoys throwing it in to see who bites. So first of all, that helps me not take things so personally, but dominant Debbie at her best is a snowplow. They love moving obstacles out of the way for other people to succeed. However, at their worst, they can become a bulldozer and can feel volatile, combative and even intimidating.

So dominant Debbie's goal in conflict, they want to win. They're very competitive and they want victory. And so that's when you might see them become aggressive or demanding, that's when that bulldozer could come, or they create win and lose outcomes because they want to win. So if you're a dominant Debbie personality style, you're going to want to find a way for some gray area, some common ground. How can you both win? Because that's really what healthy conflict does, it finds a win-win situation.

Dominant Debbie can be inflexible and sometimes even stubborn, because they want to win. And oftentimes people are in their way of that in conflict. And they may come across as overpowering with force. Now, of course, that doesn't mean that they're using force, but there's such an intensity about this style and conflict that they often aren't aware of it and it feels intimidating to the other personality styles.

Their trigger that will often lead them into conflict is a loss of control, or looking weak. And so if you have a dominant Debbie in your life that you have to have conflict with, this is how you can speak to them in conflict. First of all, be direct and be strong. They don't like being weak. So you might just need to just get some courage to face them head on. Be brief, they don't need a lot of detail, and use facts and logic versus emotion. And again, remember this is a dance. We need to learn how to speak Debbie's language without losing who we are. And this is where that dance is really important.

OK, next we're going to move on to expressive Ellie. Expressive Ellie is assertive and she is a verbal processor and she is people oriented, probably the I on the DISC, maybe a three or a seven on the enneagram. OK. So because Ellie is a verbal processor, this is me. They like being heard in conflict, and it's actually as important, and sometimes even more important than being right in conflict, they need to be heard. Their goal is always acknowledgement. And initially they may make light of the conflict by joking. That's their coping mechanism. And they can start out being very charming, which in an unhealthy way can become very manipulative. Expressive Ellie can also go very personally and attack quicker than the other personality styles. And they begin to impulsively share, or become really dramatic and emotional. This is when my husband freezes when I get all dramatic and emotional on him, my expressive Ellie kicks in. Their trigger that might lead them into conflict is being invisible, being dismissed, or not listened to, no recognition or affirmation of their concerns that they're trying to express in the conflict.

So if you have an expressive Ellie in your life, a way that you can speak to them in conflict. First of all, remain casual and lighthearted. They like a more friendly girlfriendy relationship style rather than formal. And affirm them when you can be authentic, but make sure that it's genuine, because they'll sniff it out if it's vague, or you're just blowing sparkles up their dress. So, they're going to sniff out an Oreo really quickly. So maybe say something like, *Wow, I hadn't considered that from your perspective, that feels affirming.* And they're feelers. So don't go all logical facts on them, stay more relational.

Now, let's move on to perfect Polly. Perfect Polly is reserved and she is a perfectionist who likes accuracy, justice and fairness, and she's task oriented. So she's probably a C on the DISC, and on enneagram, probably a one or a five. Now everything perfect Polly does is something that she prides herself as accurate and exact. Details matter to her even small details. I have a funny story about this, the small details. I was with a couple who, the wife was perfect Polly and the husband was telling a story, and it doesn't really matter what the story was, but he said that the story took place in the summertime. And perfect Polly interrupted him and said, "Honey, it wasn't the summertime, because I remember we were sitting on our deck and you were wearing a turtleneck, and I know you wouldn't wear a turtleneck in the summertime." So, that's how important details are to perfect Polly. Now, perfect Polly, one of the things you might need to understand is when is it important to let that detail go away? Not every detail needs to be corrected.

But perfect Polly's goal in conflict is justice. She wants things fair, right and accurate. So she can become very defensive. Think about maybe the hand on the hip. She can come across — if she's unhealthy — like she's better than everyone, or a little condescending, but she's very intellectual. And so she strategizes conflict through rehearsing and making it accurate, because that's what she's after, is accuracy. Think about a chess player making a strategic move. This is the most likely personality if they're unhealthy to be passive, aggressive or a little snarky. And they may overpower with logic and facts, because they

want to prove and they need proof. So they're the ones that screenshot, they're the ones that remind you that they sent you an email Tuesday and followed up with a message on Wednesday, and then left a voicemail on Thursday. And what happens is that just paralyzes people, because they get overpowered with logic and facts.

Their trigger for conflict is when they're made to look incompetent, maybe they caused you to miss a deadline because a teammate dropped a ball, and that made perfect Polly look incompetent, or they're given inaccurate information that then they have to present to others and they look stupid. In their opinion, they might not really look stupid, but anytime they're presenting something inaccurate, it makes them feel incompetent. So if you have a perfect Polly in conflict, here's how to speak to them. Use accurate facts. If you're not sure it's accurate, don't use it, or if you do use it, make sure they know this is my gut, but I can't verify that right now. Don't embellish things, they like straight talk. Don't over talk, just give it to them straight and plain. And they desire to be perfect. So be very sensitive in criticizing them. Be very, very sensitive because that is a big weight they carry of perfection on their shoulders all the time.

OK. Our last conflict companion is compliant Connie. And compliant Connie is reserved. She is a submissive stuffer, and she is people oriented. She's the S on the DISC and probably a nine, maybe a two, or possibly even a seven on the enneagram. And her goal in conflict is harmony and peace. She wants everyone to get along. I always like compliant Connie, I like to look at her as the turtle, where comes out of her shell and she looks around, she goes, oh, oh, there's conflict, and she dives right back in into her shell, because they want to avoid conflict all the time. They are the avoider. They feel that avoiding conflict actually means harmony. So compliant Connie needs to understand conflict doesn't mean harmony. You can have just as much lack of harmony by avoiding conflict than by having the conflict even more.

So they also play the role of the savior in relationships. They're always trying to make sure mom and dad are getting along, and that their friends are getting along. They're the rescuer in family conflict, but when they're healthy, they play an excellent mediator in conflict. They also — this is really important — compliant Connie often gives in without buying in just to end the conflict. And so make sure that you're not just saying whatever needs to be said to end the conflict, but that you really have agreement. And because of that, they stuff, because they gave in instead of buying in and they stuff, leaving something simmering under the surface that explodes irrationally somewhere else. So their trigger is if they feel someone's being picked on by someone else, they want to rise up and defend them. They're deeply loyal to certain relationships and will rise up, and then this stubborn side of them can really kick in.

So how to be specific to speak to them in conflict, pull conscientious Connie in gently and carefully. They are the most sensitive in conflict. So make sure you've done your home homework as to your conflict style to make sure you're not being too aggressive with them. Also, give them time to think it through. They're most likely to need to maybe go take a walk, or sleep on it overnight, and then go check back in with them gently after they've had a little bit of a break, most likely you're going to be the one that has to check back in. They probably won't bring it up again if you don't, unless they're super, super healthy. And then they may give in and say they agree was something just to get past it. So check with them really gently to make sure they aren't agreeing just to end the discussion.

OK. So those are our four conflict companions. And now that you know them, here are a few thoughts as we close. Romans 12:18 says, *"... so far it depends on you be at peace with all men."* Now, do you see the two parts of self-awareness that we talked about earlier in this verse? There is, so far it depends on you, that self-awareness of who you are, be at peace with all men, that's them. Who am I in the context of this relationship and what happens when we live Romans 12:18, is we begin to see people not through the lens that we wear every day, but through the lens that they wear every day. I like to say it's

like we're trying on other people's glasses. We don't know everything about everything. When we seek to understand them, we can learn to see things differently. The act of putting on the glasses is being at peace with all men by trying to see it through their lens.

Ask yourself questions like what did I learn about them in this conflict? What did I learn about me? How can I walk a step closer to them without denying, or losing the depth of me? Again, this is that dance that we need to learn to do. And then pay attention to patterns with certain people or personalities that cause you to feel dread or avoid them altogether. What can you learn from your past experiences with them based on your wiring and based on theirs? For example, they may be a dominant Debbie who simply enjoys a good debate and it's not even personal at all. And you might go, I've been taking something personal that has nothing to do with me.

So try on the glasses of your four conflict companions and you'll gain insight as to how they see their world. It will help you speak in a way that they can understand and avoid obstacles you could trip over that become unhealthy conflict. It's truly how we can harness the best of Proverbs 15 to be a gentle deflector, the quiets tempers, to use my voice to make knowledge appealing without belching foolishness, to keep my words truthful without a crushing spirit and to open my mouth with wise and good advice without engaging my foolish heart.

MB: Wow. There's a lot to chew on there, Lisa. That was such a good teaching. Really, really good. Thank you so much for... I feel like I just went to college. I just...

LA: Yeah.

KO: Me too. And can I just say something though, hearing the four different personality styles, Meredith, did you find yourself chuckling as Lisa was describing you? I will not point fingers, but I'm pointing the finger at myself. She was reading off and I was like, OK, that's me. That's me. Oh, OK. Definitely been guilty of this. And it's just funny. And so I think it's helpful to come into a conversation about conflict with a little bit of comic relief in a way, to feel like, Ugh, the burden of being myself and knowing that somebody's having to deal with me and I might be a little hard to deal with doesn't make conflict fun for anyone, but it's helpful to know that everybody else has these things that make them great as well as things that can make them hard to deal with, and just great to have these practical tools to be able to enter into those conversations.

MB: Yeah. I totally agree Kaley. And let's just call it what it is. I'm dominant Debbie. OK. And we all know it, and that's OK. But I can say from my experience — I'm 40 years old now — and the 20-year-old dominant Debbie in me was a difficult person to live with and work with. And the thing that I love about this, Lisa, what you taught here is you can see your natural wiring, and the way that God created you. And then when you bring that to the Holy Spirit, and let Him mold and shape you and chisel off those hard parts of you that to your point, Kaley, the parts that maybe aren't so nice, those get chiseled away by the Holy Spirit, and let those, the good, the bright sides of you come forward. What a gift it is to know that we have the Holy Spirit to make those changes and we don't have to will our way into it.

LA: Amen. In fact, if you really study yourself from, when I look at myself, left in my flesh, I will consistently probably till the day I die trip over some of these things.

MB: Yes.

LA: And so that's why we have to submit to the Holy Spirit. We have to say, if I could figure this out in my flesh, I would've done it by now. So that's why the Holy Spirit is so important. The other thing that's so important is every single personality has the healthy and unhealthy side. And so regardless of which one of these four companions you are, you have you at your best, you have something that can trigger you. And then you have you at your worst as well. And so that helps me balance that it's not like there's a good one and the rest of them are wrong, they all have different ways to be drawn in and out of healthy and unhealthy conflict.

KO: That's good. Lisa, I have two questions for you. So the first one, now that we know all of these different conflict types, whenever it's time to actually have that conversation, how do we decide that it's time to do that? Because if I'm going to be honest, I'm number three, I'm the perfect Polly who likes to strategize, and sometimes I can get so stuck in my head about how I'm going to say it that I'll delay it. And to be honest, sometimes just don't even have the conversation because I'm afraid I'm going to do it wrong. And so there's probably people like me, or there might be other people who are real quick to jump the gun and don't necessarily think things through. And so how do you, as a leadership coach, advise us to enter into those conversations?

LA: Well, it depends on the relationship, honestly. So, if this is the people that live in your home, for instance, if it's your husband or your kids, you can start having these conversations before there's conflict. So what if you all listen to this podcast together and identify, yep, I'm the turtle, I'm Debbie, I'm Connie, and you, there's something about identifying your strengths and weaknesses before there's a motion and conflict involved that will help prepare you for the conflict. And so if there are people in your life that you can walk through this podcast with, please do so, because when conflict arises, you'll be prepared for it, you'll be able to understand ways that you want to express, but then the ways someone else needs to receive. If it's somebody that you continually have an issue with, maybe it's time to say, hey, I think I've been speaking to you wrong. I think I've been overprocessing with you. So how can we find this middle ground?

I know you want things to be accurate and right. So what does that look like if we worked together and made it this way? So I would just be very careful to understand what the relationship is. Sometimes guys, you're the only one that has the, be at peace with all men, Romans 12:18 verse in you, the Holy Spirit hasn't given it to that boss of yours yet. And so it's you that can do the best you can. It's still serving that person by doing your homework of understanding who they are, even if they never do their homework, that still honors God, because what you're wanting to do is to live the truth of be at peace with all men.

KO: That's good. That's great. So helpful. And my next one is, is I think whenever I listen to something like this, I want to say, OK, I'm going to do what you said. I'm going to think through the people and who I'm dealing with. I'm going to think about myself in this situation. I'm going to confidently have the conversation, but I can't always assume that it's going to go well on the other side. So what about when it doesn't go well, what do you do?

LA: Well, first of all, before, during and after, you've got to be in an attitude of prayer, I can't tell you how many times it's gone badly because I did these things, but I didn't pray it. And God didn't release me to have the conversation. So just because you do it right doesn't mean it's the right time to have it. So, that's the first thing. But the other thing is acknowledge it; acknowledge, I really want us to work this out. I know we're still not speaking each other's language yet, but I really, really want us to work this

out. I care more about this relationship than I do being right. I care more about this relationship than I do proving myself and really, really put it to prayer.

And then also understand, that's why I mentioned searching for patterns. There may be relationships guys that — remember when I said we try to put on each other's glasses. Sometimes we see things similarly to somebody and sometimes no matter how hard we try, we will just never really see things the same way. But it's the act of trying on each other's glasses, the act of caring enough to have godly conversations with people and give them dignity by looking through their lenses that I think honors God.

KO: Yeah, that's great. This is so helpful, Lisa. And I know that there's a lot here that we talked about, that our listeners are probably like, wait a minute, I need to go back and write this down. And so I want to take a moment to remind everybody that we include a transcript of every single podcast episode on our show notes at proverbs31.org/listen. And so if you're in the car right now, or maybe listening at your desk and you want to go back and dig through this teaching more, maybe process it with somebody. Then all you have to do is go to proverbs31.org/listen and download the transcript and you can print it off and highlight it, take more notes and things like that, because this was really great, Lisa. And I want our listeners to be able to go do that.

And also, I want our listeners to be able to connect with you and all of the great information that you have over on your website at LJAllencoaching.com that takes people further into learning more about themselves and their personality styles and how you can be a resource for them as they become better versions of themselves. And so, like I said, you guys can check out Lisa's website at LJAllencoaching.com.

MB: And little personal endorsement here. The services Ms. Allen can extend, y'all don't know this, maybe you do know this. Lisa is one of my very best friends in the whole world. And she has helped me navigate conflict with people that I love, people that I work with. We've even navigated conflict together y'all.

LA: We have, we've been expressive Ellie and dominant Debbie, but you know what? We've done it for God's glory.

MB: We really have, and Lisa, you have really taught me personally so much how to do this. And so I really want to encourage you today. If you even have an inkling of, you know what? I think I need Lisa Allen to be my leadership coach, go check out her website y'all, you won't regret it. She has so much to offer the world and you, as you learn to become the very best version, the version most like Jesus, that you can be. So I also wanted to mention, we have a free download that we've linked in our show notes at proverbs31.org/listen. It's called "A Guide to Tough Conversations" and it's a resource that will help you avoid those misunderstandings and possible tensions as well as navigate being on the receiving end of maybe one of those tough conversations. So get your download for free today on our show notes.

KO: And lastly, we're excited to announce that registration for our 2022, She Speaks Conference is officially open. And guys, you really don't want to miss out on this incredible opportunity to learn from experts in the industry. This year we're giving you our best kept secrets to creating faith-based content that effectively reaches your audience, and it's going to be a great conference. And so if you're ready to get started and take that first step in sharing your message with the world, then She Speaks is the right conference for you. You can check out everything you need to know about the conference at shespeaksconference.com.

MB: Well, thank you so much for joining us on the show today friends. At Proverbs 31 Ministries, we believe when you know the truth and live the truth, it really will change everything in your life. Thanks for tuning in.