

Learning to Get Along with Difficult People

(Developed in 2004 from multiple sources)

Introduction: 1Peter 2:15

- A. Where are welcoming porch lights, there will be bugs. Where there are friendly, tail-wagging dogs there will be fleas.
 - 1. Where there are humans, there will be misunderstandings and differences of opinion, even if those humans profess to be Christians, even if they are good Christians.
- B. Nine Types of Difficult People:
 - 1. The Sherman tank will run right over you.
 - 2. The star performer is entitled to your undivided attention.
 - 3. The megaphone will talk your ear off.
 - 4. The bubble buster deflates everyone's enthusiasm.
 - 5. The volcano has an explosively erupting temper.
 - 6. The cry baby is a chronic complainer.
 - 7. The nit picker is an unappeasable perfectionist.
 - 8. The backbiter is a master of calculated rumor.
 - 9. The space cadet is on a different wavelength.
- C. Eight Truths about Difficult People:
 - 1. Everyone has a difficult person in his life.
 - 2. Everyone becomes a difficult person to someone else.
 - 3. We can seldom change them, but we can learn to relate to them.
 - 4. We will not get along equally with everyone; some may not like us.
 - 5. We should not expect everyone to agree with or like us all the time.
 - 6. We must manage our expectations of others and ourselves.
 - 7. We often give up too soon on some relationships.
 - 8. We get along best when we are mature spiritually and emotionally.
- D. Seven Biblical Responses to Difficult People
 - 1. Realize you can't please everyone - John 5:30-31
 - a. Jesus deals with a group of difficult people by appealing to four witnesses of His authority.
 - 2. Refuse to play their game (or be manipulated) - Matt. 22:18-20
 - a. The Pharisees tried to catch Jesus by pitting him against the government. He refused to play.
 - 3. Never retaliate - Matt. 5:38-39
 - 4. Pray for them - Matt. 5:44-45
 - 5. Control your temper - Prov. 15:1, 18
 - 6. Be quick to forgive and quicker to ask for forgiveness - Matt. 6:14-15
 - 7. Remember that everything and everyone is under God's power
 - a. Job 9:2-5
- E. Six Christian Qualities that Enable You to Cope With Difficult People
 - 1. Take the high road (do the right thing regardless) - Col. 3:12
 - a. Remember who we are -- God's people, dearly loved by Him, and expected to live holy lives.

2. Remember that you're not perfect either (you may be someone else's difficult person) - Col. 3:13-14
 - a. Remember that you are forgiven; remember that the Lord is patient with you as you grow to overcome your own weaknesses and bad behaviors.
3. Your actions are more important than your feelings - Col. 3:8-10
 - a. Your feelings may be sending you in one direction emotionally, but you can choose attitudes and behaviors that move you in the right direction.
 - b. If you feel dislike for another person, and you show them kindness, you're not being hypocritical, you're being holy.
4. Bring Christ with you in every conversation - Col. 3:16
 - a. If you're having a conversation with someone and angry words are about to be exchanged, ask, "How would Jesus say this?"
 - b. Even if it's true, even if he deserves it, if you say something critical about someone who isn't there, you are gossiping.
5. Pursue personal peace - Col. 3:15
 - a. People who constantly stir up tension in relationships do it because they have no peace within themselves.
 - b. People who have peace have no desire to stir things up.
 - c. The hardest part of dealing with difficult people is coping with the stress of bearing the burden of being the mature, honorable one in the relationship. "Why can't they do their part?!"
 - d. There is no easy answer.
6. Take only authorized actions - Col. 3:17
 - a. Not WWJD; that's subjective.
 - b. Rather, what did Jesus tell me to do?

Conclusion:

- A. Five verses that tell us why we need to get along with difficult people:
 1. 1Peter 2:19-23