

# Learning How to Get Along With Difficult Christians

Philippians 4:1-3

## Learning How to Get Along With Difficult Christians

- Acts 15:36-39 - “Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing. 37 Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark. 38 But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work. 39 Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another.”
- The question is not “***If*** Christians disagree, what should we do?” but “***When*** Christians disagree, what should we do?”

## Learning How to Get Along With Difficult Christians

- Two sisters in Christ at Philippi who were not getting along.
  - Phil. 4:1-3 - “Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved. 2 I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. 3 And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.”

## Learning How to Get Along With Difficult Christians

- Paul had already emphasized the importance of unity.
  - Phil. 1:27 - “Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel.”
  - Phil. 2:2 - “Fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.”

# Sincere Commendation

- Before he commanded, he commended.
  - Phil. 4:1 - “Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.”

# Sincere Commendation

- Phil. 4:1 - A verse filled with warmth and affection.
  - “Brethren” - they were family.
  - “Beloved” - *agapetos* - used it twice for emphasis. (*Strongs*)
  - “Longed for” - *epipothetos* - “yearned upon, greatly loved” - he appeared homesick to see his friends. (*Strongs*)
  - “My joy and crown” - he thought of them as his crowning achievement.

# Sincere Commendation

- Do you want to help two Christians to be reconciled?
  - Do not start by pointing out their short comings.
  - First, affirm your care for them; before you influence their wills, you must reach their hearts.

# Sensitive Confrontation

- The point is to save the sisters and spare the congregation.
  - Phil. 4:2 - “I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.” (*Strongs*)
  - Euodia as a woman’s name means “sweet fragrance”; when used as a noun, it means “travel or journey.”
  - Syntyche can mean “pleasant occurrence” as a name; as a noun it means “accident.” (*Strongs*)
- Paul directly confronted the problem; he encouraged them to resolve their differences.



# Sensitive Confrontation

- These women were worth saving.
  - Phil. 4:3 - “And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.”
  - Labored - sunathleo - “to wrestle in company with, to seek jointly; labor with, strive together.” (*Strongs*)

# Sensitive Confrontation

- This does not mean they preached.
  - 1Tim. 2:8-12 - Apostle Paul's inspired discourse of the limitations of the roles of men and women.
  - Sisters in Christ can spread the Gospel in many ways: teaching other women, instructing children, giving support, nurturing the sick and in need, finding and gathering prospects.

# Sensitive Confrontation

- These women were worth saving.
  - “Whose names are in the book of life.”
  - Rev. 21:27 - “But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.”
- When Paul spoke of these two ladies, they reminded him of others who labored with him, “Clement and the rest of my fellow-workers.”
  - These ladies, knowing their names was written in the Lamb’s Book of Life, should have been motivated to resolve their differences, but they lost sight of this and needed someone to help them recover it.

# Sensitive Confrontation

- On the other hand, their present conduct damaged their own relationship and threatened the peace and well being of the congregation.
- Their friction threatened to undo all of the good they had done.

# Sensitive Confrontation

- How do you think they felt when they saw their names written in a public letter to Philippi?
- If one line were to be written about your life what would it be?
- Why was Paul so specific regarding the two women and their disagreement?
- The danger of it spreading to other Christians.

# Satisfying Conciliation: How Did Paul Handle The Matter?

- He did something – immediately.
  - He did not ignore it, hoping it would go away.
  - He did something as soon as he knew the problem existed.
  - He did not wait until the congregation took sides.

# Satisfying Conciliation: How Did Paul Handle The Matter?

- He remained neutral – but concerned.
  - He did not side with either woman and urged the same for others.

# Satisfying Conciliation: How Did Paul Handle The Matter?

- When two Christians clash, the Bible teaches that both are to take the first step in being reconciled.
  - Matt. 18:15 - “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.”
  - Matt. 5:23-24 - “Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”



# Satisfying Conciliation: How Did Paul Handle The Matter?

- He urged unity – strongly.
  - Sometimes Christians think that their misunderstandings are “nobody else’s business,” but trouble in the congregation is everyone’s business.

# Satisfying Conciliation: How Did Paul Handle The Matter?

- Disagreements not only harm those who disagree, but they also give others a bad impression of the church.
  - 1Cor. 1:13 - “Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?”
- They can frighten away unbelievers.
  - John 17:21 - “that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.”

# Satisfying Conciliation: How Did Paul Handle The Matter?

- The Lord wants us to live at peace.
  - Mark 9:50 - “Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another.”
  - Psalm 133:1 - “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity!”
  - Prov. 6:16, 19 - “These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: ... 19 A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren.”

# Satisfying Conciliation: How Did Paul Handle The Matter?

- He reminded them – appropriately.
  - Paul reminded the two women that they were both “in the Lord.” Being in Christ gave them common ground on which to meet.
  - “Standing, as it were, at the foot of the cross and looking up into the face of the One who had died for them, they should have joined hands in praise for the Lord instead of looking with animosity at each other.” *(Tom Moore)*

# Satisfying Conciliation: How Did Paul Handle The Matter?

- He helped them – competently.
  - Few tasks are more difficult than trying to mend fences between brethren, but even fewer are more important.

# The Essential Nature Of Being In Christ Is Reconciliation

- 2Cor. 5:17-21 - “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 18 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. 20 Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. 21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”