

# Learning How to Get Along With Difficult Christians

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake from a sermon by Tom Moore)

## Introduction:

- A. Acts 15:36-40 - The question is not “If Christians disagree, what should we do?” but “When Christians disagree, what should we do?”
- B. Phil. 4:1-3 - Two sisters in Christ at Philippi who were not getting along
  - 1. Phil. 1:27, 2:2 - Paul had already emphasized the importance of unity.
  - 2. The way Paul handled this situation can help us know what to do when brothers and sisters in Christ are being difficult with one another.

## I. SINCERE COMMENDATION

- A. Paul first establishes a positive atmosphere; being positive in the right circumstances and settings sends the message that we expect the process to move forward.
  - 1. He reassured all the Christians at Philippi, including the two troubled sisters, of his love.
  - 2. Before he commanded, he commended - Phil. 4:1
- B. A verse filled with warmth and affection.
  - 1. “Brethren” – they were family; don’t assume the relationship is over.
    - a. Your family will always be your family, regardless of how much you may disagree.
  - 2. “Beloved” – agapetos - used it twice for emphasis. (Strong’s)
  - 3. “Longed for” – epiphetos - “yearned upon, greatly loved” - he appeared homesick to see his friends. (Strong’s)
  - 4. “My joy and crown” – he thought of them as his crowning achievement.
- C. Do you want to help two Christians to be reconciled?
  - 1. Do not start by pointing out their shortcomings.
  - 2. First, affirm your care for them; before you influence their wills, you must touch their hearts.

## II. SENSITIVE CONFRONTATION

- A. The point is to save the sisters and spare the congregation.
  - 1. The Philippian church was Paul’s crown, but there was a “thorn” in the crown: two sisters who had a serious disagreement.
- B. In direct fashion, Paul said - Phil. 4:2
  - 1. Euodia as a woman’s name means “sweet fragrance”; when used as a noun, it means “travel or journey.” (Strong’s)
  - 2. Syntyche can mean “pleasant” as a name; as a noun it means accident. (Strong’s)
  - 3. At the time, they were not pleasant, but spreading the stench of discord.
- C. Paul directly confronted the problem.
  - 1. Generally, it is not enough just to put your arm around them.
  - 2. You must encourage them to resolve their differences.
- D. These women were worth saving - Phil. 4:3
  - 1. “For they labored with me in the Gospel.”

2. Sunathleo - "to wrestle in company with, to seek jointly; labor with, strive together for" (Strong's).
  3. This does not mean they preached - 1Tim. 2:8-12 - Paul's inspired discourse of the limitations of the roles of men and women.
  4. 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.
  5. "Whose names are in the book of life" - Rev. 21:27
  6. When Paul spoke of these two ladies, they reminded him of others who labored with him: "Clement and the rest of my fellow-workers."
  7. These ladies, knowing that their name was written in God's Book of Life, should have been motivated to resolve their differences.
    - a. They lost sight of this and needed someone to help them.
- E. On the other hand, their present conduct damaged their own relationship and threatened the peace and well-being of the congregation.
1. The friction threatened to undo all of the good they had done.
  2. How do you think they felt when they saw their names written in a public letter to Philippi? Embarrassed? Ashamed? It is still read to this day.
  3. If one line were to be written about your life what would it be? "She did not get along with others"?
  4. Why was Paul so specific regarding the two women and their disagreement? There was the danger of it spreading.

### III. SATISFYING CONCILIATION

- A. How did Paul handle this potentially explosive situation?
- B. He did something -- immediately.
  1. He did not ignore it, hoping it would go away.
  2. He did something as soon as he knew the problem existed.
  3. He did not wait until the congregation took sides.
- C. He remained neutral – but concerned.
  1. He did not side with either woman and urged the same for others.
  2. When two Christians clash, the Bible teaches that each is to take the first step in being reconciled - Matt. 18:15, 5:23-24
- D. He urged unity – strongly.
  1. Sometimes Christians think that their misunderstandings are "nobody else's business," but trouble in the congregation is everyone's business.
  2. Disagreements not only harm those who disagree, but they also give others a bad impression of the church - 1Cor. 1:13
  3. It can frighten away unbelievers - John 17:21
  4. The Lord wants us to live at peace - Mark 9:50; Psalm 133:1; Prov. 6:19
- E. He reminded them – appropriately.
  1. Paul reminded the two women that they were both "in the Lord."
  2. Being in Christ gave them common ground on which to meet.
  3. "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)

F. He helped them – competently.

1. Few tasks are more difficult than trying to mend fences between brethren, but even fewer are more important

Conclusion:

A. The essential nature of being in Christ is reconciliation - 2Cor. 5:17-21