

- We often refer to the local church we are a part of as our family. I certainly think that is an appropriate term to use because we do act like a family. We laugh and cry together. We help each other out when we have needs. We do many things to aid one another. However, a family is not without its troubles. Sometimes we disagree. Sometimes the disagreement is no more than just a simple misunderstanding, but other times it can be much more serious where someone has actually wronged another person. Those things happen because people are involved and we sometimes make mistakes.
- The same is true for our relationships outside of the church. Sometimes we get into disagreements and conflicts with others. We might wrong someone or the same could be done to us. Regardless, as Christians we need to know how to conduct ourselves in those situations. We can read in the Bible where the Christians of the first century had disputes between themselves. One of the more well known ones is found in **Acts 15:36ff** involving Paul, Barnabas, and Mark. Barnabas wanted to bring Mark along, but Paul was having none of it because Mark had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued on with their work. The end result is that Paul and Barnabas go their separate ways. Brethren sometimes disagree and have conflict. What is necessary to resolve conflicts? Lets look at 4 must haves when we disagree.

4 Must Haves When We Disagree

I. We must be loving.

- A. Love is the most important thing to have during a conflict.
 - 1. All of the characteristics of love from **I Corinthians 13** are vital to a positive outcome in any sort of disagreement.
 - 2. Each of the 15 characteristics listed from **vv. 4-7** are of the utmost importance for a disagreement to be resolved in the best way possible.
- B. Bad example where love was not shown: Naboth, his vineyard, Ahab, and Jezebel. (**I Kings 21**)
 - 1. Ahab wanted to buy Naboth's vineyard for his own because it was close to his home. (**v.2**)
 - 2. Naboth refused because it was the inheritance of his father and he couldn't part ways with it. (**v.3**)
 - 3. Ahab starts a pity party and his wife, Jezebel, takes notice. She asks Ahab about it and he tells her what has happened. (**vv.4-6**)
 - 4. Jezebel takes matters into her own hands and conspires a plan to have Naboth killed so Ahab could have his vineyard. (**vv.7-16**)
- C. Good example of love being shown: Jonathan and David. (**I Samuel 18, 23**)
 - 1. Because of his father, Saul, Jonathan was the rightful heir to the throne of Israel.
 - 2. However, David was God's anointed king, and this could have easily created a huge divide in their relationship.
 - 3. Jonathan would have none of it though because Jonathan loved David even as himself. (**I Sam. 18:1,3**)
 - 4. Through what could have been an extremely difficult and awkward relationship, Jonathan loved and respected David. During the conflict with Saul, Jonathan recognized David for what he was and he protected him. (**I Sam. 23:17**)

II. We must be humble.

- A. As Christians we are called to be of a humble spirit.
 - 1. "Blessed are those who are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (**Matt. 5:3**) Those who are spiritually humble will have success in their faith.
 - 2. "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling." (**Prov. 16:18**)
 - 3. We are not to think of ourselves more highly than we should because we could very well be the one that is wrong in this conflict or disagreement. (**Rom. 12:3**)
 - 4. If we engage in a disagreement or conflict without any consideration that we might be wrong then we are setting ourselves up for a long disagreement without much chance of resolving it.
 - 5. An arrogant attitude will just be gasoline on the fire.
- B. Bad example where humility was not shown: Uzziah and the priest. (**II Chronicles 26:16-19**)
 - 1. Uzziah had much success as the young king of Judah. Unfortunately, his early and sustained success made him arrogant and he refused to admit that he was wrong when he tried to burn incense in the temple.

2. He was outraged that the priest wouldn't allow his wrong behavior and he was eventually struck with leprosy for his arrogance and disobedience.
- C. Good example of humility being shown: Abraham and Lot's herds. **(Genesis 13)**
1. Abram and Lot's people tried to live together in the same land, but it just couldn't be done and the herdsman were making a big fuss about it.
 2. Abram had every right to choose what was to be done, but he humbled himself and didn't want there to be any disagreement with Lot, so he let Lot decide which place he would take and Abram would take the other. **(vv.8,9)**

III. We must be patient.

- A. Patience is a must when it comes to disagreements and conflicts.
1. A.T. Robertson does a great job of defining patience in his quote, "patience is... holding out a long time and putting up with a great deal."
 2. We as Christians are to be "quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger." **(James 1:19)**
 3. When there is a short fuse, things tend to blow up before the situation can be resolved.
 4. Getting angry and upset quickly rarely ever helps a disagreement or conflict.
- B. Bad example where patience was not shown: Job's wife. **(Job 2)**
1. Job had suffered many things by this point and was struggling greatly.
 2. His wife wasn't going to put up with Job still being faithful to God so she demanded that Job just go ahead and give up, curse God, and die. She had no patience in this situation.
- C. Good example of patience being shown: Jacob and Laban. **(Genesis 29)**
1. Jacob had an agreement with Laban to work for him for seven years for his daughter Rachel. **(vv.18-20)**
 2. After his time had been served, Jacob asked for his wife, but Laban instead gave him Leah. Jacob had every right to be upset. **(vv.21-25)**
 3. Jacob was patient and agreed to work for another seven years, and through his patience he ended up with the woman he wanted and the conflict was resolved. **(vv.26-30)**

IV. We must be willing to forgive.

- A. We, as Christians, have been forgiven of so much. We should be the quickest people to forgive others when they might have been wrong and ask for forgiveness.
1. If we are not willing to forgive others, then God will not forgive us. **(Matthew 6:12-14)**
 2. An unwillingness to forgive will not lead to reconciliation. In fact, an unwillingness to forgive will create a bitter spirit that will eventually lead the person into even more trouble.
- B. Bad example where forgiveness was not shown: The prodigal son's brother. **(Luke 15)**
1. The younger son left the family with his share of the wealth and blew it all in stupid and wasteful living. **(vv.13-16)**
 2. Meanwhile, his older brother continued to live with the family and work.
 3. Upon the young brother's return, the older brother was angry and refused to celebrate his return. He held hateful feelings in his heart and was not able to resolve conflict because of his jealousy, hatred, and unwillingness to forgive. **(vv.28-30)**
- C. Good example of patience being shown: Paul and Mark. **(II Timothy 4)**
1. Back to our original disagreement between Paul, Barnabas, and Mark.
 2. Love, humility, patience, and forgiveness must have been present because Paul later asks Timothy to bring Mark to him. **(v.11)**
 3. Paul recognized Mark's usefulness in the ministry and they resolved their conflict for the Gospel's sake.

We will get into disagreements, arguments, and conflicts. However, through it all we must be willing to be loving. We must be humble, and we must be patient. If we are wronged then we must be forgiving. If we can do these things then we can resolve conflicts. May God help us to exhibit these attributes that are much needed in our everyday lives, and especially needed when we disagree.