

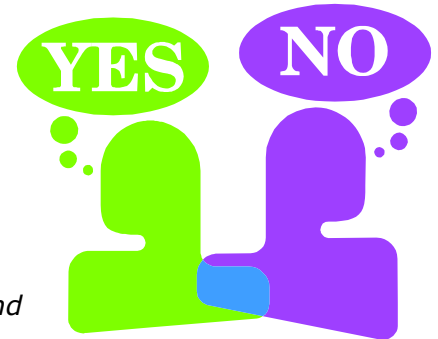


E-Worship 4:23

An online resource for officers and worship leaders in the 21st century

"A time is coming...when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks." - John 4:23

When Christians disagree...



"How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!... For there the Lord bestows His blessing, even life forevermore." - Psalm 133:1,3b

"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." - Rom. 12:18

"May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that You sent Me and have loved them." - John 17:23

In my lifetime, I have seen a lot of dissension in the Christian community. I have witnessed several church splits. I have seen many who have left their church because of disagreement with the pastor over the way issues and protocol and the running of the church was being handled. I have seen many instances where people were quick to judge, and quick to slander. And sadly, I myself at times have participated in the process.

It is one of the biggest footholds the devil has in the church. We squabble the way everyone squabbles, and sometimes the biggest criticism of the church from the secular world is that there is no difference in our behavior from anyone else: We abuse, we fight, we are petty, we belittle, and on it goes.

"They will know we are Christians by our love..."

What poor examples we often are! What a poor witness we have been! So how can we turn it around? Dissention happens. It's inevitable. Personality conflict is unavoidable. But whatever change is to take place must begin with me, with each of us individually. Both Christ and Paul stressed that unity in the body would be a testimony and drawing card for the secular world (John 13:35; Romans 15:5,6). How we treat each other directly affects the credibility of our Christianity, and how our denomination and faith is perceived by the outside world.

But knowing it and practicing it are two different things. So how are we to deal with conflict when it happens? Here are some general guidelines to help you deal with conflict constructively:

1) Welcome it. Recognize that through the conflict God has given you a great learning opportunity to help you mature spiritually. What does God want you to do with all the angry feelings you have? How can you constructively channel them?

2) Don't be hasty in responding to the conflict. The most damage happens because we are too quick with our tongues, and we lash out in the heat of the moment. Take a time out to breathe slowly, calm yourself down, and sort out the situation in your head.

3) Try and see things from your antagonist's viewpoint. When you are with them, try to repeat back in your own words the arguments they have just given you, to make sure you have understood correctly. This, too, will help them realize that you are really hearing them, and empathizing with their situation. If you have indeed misunderstood them, they will then be able to correct you.

4) Always handle the situation with the conflicting party in private. Do whatever you can to keep from blabbering about it to other people, for by doing so, you will be maligning their reputation, whether you intend to or not (Prov. 16:28). There is an old saying that if people like something you do, they will tell you, but if they don't like what you do, they will tell everyone else. Unfortunately, this only contributes to dissention in the church and does nothing to resolve the issue.

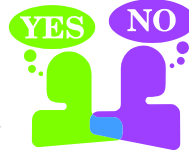
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When Christians disagree...



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5) Respect those people that God has placed in authority over you, even if you disagree with them. If you have stated your case and the leadership has chosen to go in another direction, don't be too quick to leave in a huff. Trust God to work out the situation for you. Ask God if it is really His will for you to walk out of the circumstance you find yourself in. It may be that God really wants you to bite your lip, hang in there, and see the circumstance through. You may find that over time, God will actually orchestrate an amazing glory-filled resolution that would not have happened if you had walked away. The rule should be that "I will not abandon a messy situation unless God specifically confirms to me that it is His will that I do so."

6) If you are in leadership and must reprimand someone, do so privately, with kindness and respect for their feelings (Matt. 18:15). Don't be afraid to state what the consequences will be for continued disruptive behavior, if that applies. But make sure the other party knows how much you value them, and that you are addressing a circumstantial issue, not attacking them personally.

Conflict is never easy, but God has never told us to run away from the battlefield. How we deal with conflict is a vital part of spiritual growth. It is easy to be nice to those who are nice to me. But the real hallmark of a Christian is if he can pray for those who persecute him and be kind to those who treat him unfairly. The only way we learn to do that is by facing conflict head-on, God's way.

For further study, read through Ephesians 4. What guidance does Paul give in this chapter that would help Christians achieve unity and dispel dissension? Other passages you can look at include Eph. 5:21, 1 Cor. 12 & 13, Rom. 12:9-21; Rom. 14 & 15; 1 John 3:11-20; 4:7-21; John 15:9-17; James 1:19-21,26; 3:1-12; 4:1-3,11-12; 1 Peter 3:8-17; 4:8-11; Phil. 2:1-4; 2 Tim. 2:22-26;

Other articles on Conflict Resolution:

www.swapmeetdave.com/Bible/Conflict.htm

www.rcffellowship.org - click onto "Bible Study download" at left, then scroll down and click onto "Conflict Resolution".

http://www.prismleadership.org/inc/Basic_Principles_of_Conflict_Resolution.doc

Sing to SA Tunebook #147 "Ellacombe"

We all are one in mission,
We all are one in call;
Our varied gifts united
By Christ, the Lord of all.
A single great commission
Compels us from above
To plan and work together,
That all may know Christ's love.

We all are called for service
To witness in God's name;
Our ministries are different,
Our purpose is the same:
To touch the lives of others
By God's surprising grace,
So every folk and nation
May feel God's warm embrace.

We all behold one vision,
A stark reality:
The steward of salvation
Was nailed upon a tree;
Yet resurrected Justice
Gives rise that we may share
Free reconciliation,
And hope amid despair.

Now let us be united
And let our song be heard:
Now let us be a vessel
For God's redeeming Word.
We all are one in mission,
We all are one in call:
Our varied gifts united
By Christ, the Lord of all.

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Sing to either SA Tunebook #435 "Europe" or #408 "Austria"

Christ has called us to new visions,
Here to celebrate and praise,
Here confess our old divisions,
Here our peace petitions raise.
Come repentant, come forgiving,
Come in joy and hope and prayer.
Christ, once crucified, now living,
Bids us faith and love to share.

As we listen to each other,
As we speak in joy and pain,
We become as sister, brother,
Reconciled, at one again.
Only thus in work, and feeling
For our neighbour far or near,
Can we worship God, revealing
Gifts of grace among us here.

Christ still calls us, young and aging,
Men and women, bound and free:
Colours, talents, thoughts engaging,
Joined in one community.
Christ remolding, healing, leading,
Sins forgiven, life restored:
Let us live, God's justice heeding,
Strengthened by our risen Lord.