

How To Deal with Difficult People

Preview

How many of you have ever had to deal with a difficult person? Everyone's hand should be up, including mine.

Whether it's the person taking too long to order their coffee or the guy who reminds the teacher that we had homework due, there will be people who will get on our nerves. However, the way we treat these people may make or break our opportunity to witness to them.

Praise

The main point of this lesson is learning how to deal with people in a loving way. Go around the room and talk about what Jesus' love means to you.

Parable

With 7.4 billion people on Earth, we are bound to have disagreements with at least one of them. More than likely you will encounter many situations that require you to deal with difficult people, whether they're in your classroom, workplace, or your own family. A little secret: that's okay. Being a Christian in this world means we will meet people who don't share the same opinions as we. (Spoiler alert: Jesus dealt with people like this as well). Let's look at how we can use Christ as an example for how we should deal with conflict when it arises.

Present

I'd like to give you some points that may help you when dealing with difficult people. Let's use Jesus as an example.

1. Jesus loves everyone. Romans 5:8 (NKJV) says, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." When we boil this verse down, we see that when Jesus was on the cross, He was fully aware that every single person He was dying for was a sinner. This verse demonstrates that Jesus' love for us is not limited by our sin. The person who cut you off in traffic? Jesus died for him. The student who may bully you? Jesus died for her. The person you see in the mirror every

morning? Yep, him too. It is hard to treat a difficult person poorly when we realize Jesus doesn't love him or her any less than He loves us. Every person, whether they are difficult or not, has value to offer to the kingdom of God.

2. Jesus didn't isolate Himself from difficult people. Jesus ate with sinners and tax collectors. These people were liars, cheaters, scam artists, and the like. And yet Jesus and His disciples sat and ate with them. When people saw this, they were perplexed and wondered how a man of Jesus' stature could eat with such vile people. Jesus responded to them in Mark 2:17 (NKJV) by saying, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." Now, I'm not saying we need to go out of our way to sit at the same lunch table as the difficult person, but I am saying that we need to go out of our way to be accessible to them. What a shame it would be for us to cut off access to the gospel for someone simply because they share a different opinion than ours. As Christians, we cannot isolate ourselves from difficult people. We need to look to Jesus as our example for how to deal with the difficult people in our lives.

3. Jesus responded with love. Jesus gave us pretty clear directions on how to deal with our enemies. In Matthew 5:43-44 (NKJV), Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you." That is straightforward and up front. Jesus left no room for options in this verse; He gave us one specific way to deal with difficult people: treat them with love. Is there a difficult someone in your life? Love them. Pray for them. Jesus was a man adored by many and hated by just as many. He was seen as a threat and He had a lot of enemies. If anyone deserved to be spiteful toward the difficult people in their life, it was Jesus. Yet when teaching about this very issue, He responded with love. When someone is beginning to get under your skin, I encourage you to fall back to the teaching of Jesus, who loved perfectly.

Practice

Let's review.

1) Jesus loves everyone. There is not a single person on this Earth who has existed, currently exists, or will exist that Jesus didn't die for. Jesus died for sinner and saint alike, and when we begin to grasp this concept, it becomes easier for us to deal with difficult people positively.

2) Jesus didn't isolate Himself. Jesus and His love and mercy are accessible to everyone. Jesus never reserved Himself for believers only. Likewise, we cannot isolate ourselves from those with whom we disagree. When we truly know what we believe, we can't withhold that information from anyone. The gospel deserves to be shared with everyone.

3) Jesus responded with love. When we come in contact with adversity, how we respond is critical to our credibility as Christians. When Jesus taught the people how they should treat their enemies, He told them to love them and pray for them. We must do the same.

Pray

Lord, help me to spread Your love to everyone. When I am faced with a difficult person, help me to respond in love. You know the intentions of everyone's hearts; let the intentions of my heart be to love those who may hate me. Help me to grow in this area every day.

Plus

Encourage everyone to start praying for those with whom they may disagree. Encourage them to respond with love.