

# DISAGREEING *Agreeably*

by Bill Wakefield



One thing is true about us as human beings: the longer we are around each other, the greater the likelihood we will begin to get on one another's nerves. Just ask husbands and wives if they agree all the time. Just ask coworkers if all their collegial relationships are going well. Just ask anyone who is involved in an intensely passionate endeavor if there aren't times when others who share their same intensity and passion are difficult to get along with.

Have you ever heard anyone make the statement that ministry would be wonderful place to be if it weren't for all the difficult human beings that one has to put up with to do the ministry? Perhaps you, like me, have even made this statement yourself.

## Often we as individuals attempt to resolve conflict (externally) with others before we are ready to do so.

It is impossible to agree with everyone all the time. Striving for this goal will turn a person into a people pleaser absent of identity. Possessing the skills to disagree agreeably allows a person not only to maintain a healthy sense of personal identity but to maintain a strong passion for ministry. There are two sets of skills required to effectively disagree agreeably: internal conflict resolution skills and external conflict resolution skills.

### Internal Conflict Resolution

Often we as individuals attempt to resolve conflict (externally) with others before we are ready to do so. Unless conflict is resolved internally first, it is extremely difficult to resolve conflict with others without putting them on the defensive. There are five steps necessary

to resolve conflict internally so as to be in a position of strength to resolve conflict externally or disagree agreeably:

- Create an inventory of hurt and disappointment caused by another.
- Review the inventory to determine the negative emotional theme.
- Define a godly perspective of yourself from Scripture.
- Pray for the Holy Spirit to peel away layers of pain so that hurt and disappointment can be diffused.
- Pray for forgiveness of others who have caused your hurt or pain.

*Create an inventory of hurt and disappointment caused by another.* Resolving conflict internally requires a great deal of self-awareness. Most of us are moving so quickly through our lives and ministry that we are unaware of the compilation of daily life events that are creating hurt and disappointment for us. Daily events create human emotions. It is often very eye-opening and productive

to take a few minutes daily to inventory our relationships with others and the events of the day. Usually, we can identify several events that have created painful emotions. Defining these events is crucial to diffusing conflict internally.

Often in ministry teams there are others who over a period of time have proved difficult to deal with. Completing an inventory of the history of events between you and the other person that have caused hurt and disappointment can be very enlightening.

*Review the inventory to determine the negative emotional theme.* The primary resource that Satan has at his disposal for disrupting Christian ministry is human emotion. As daily events create emotion, Satan will try to use this emotion to destroy relationships and undermine

our God-given identity. If Satan becomes successful in this endeavor, individuals and relationships become paralyzed.

When reviewing our inventory for an emotional theme, we may find words such as anger, hurt, and frustration. These emotions can be referred to as cover emotions. Cover emotions are general emotions that we feel as emotions compile over time.

If we peel back the cover emotions and look deeper inside, we discover core emotions, which are emotions personalized for us by Satan himself. Examples of core emotions would be feelings of being unloved, insignificant, insecure, worthless, valueless, rejected, unappreciated, disrespected, and abandoned. Satan's plan is to select a few core emotions and spoon-feed them to us through daily events in order to paralyze our ability to serve the Lord and distort our ability to work successfully with others for God's glory. Defining this emotional theme is essential to resolving internal conflict and to disagreeing with others agreeably.

*Define a godly perspective of yourself from Scripture.* Diffusing the hurt and disappointment caused by daily life events and resulting emotional pain can be done only as we build our arsenal of Scripture that tells us how God sees us. We have a choice as Christians about how we see ourselves. We can see ourselves as the product of events and emotions, or we can see ourselves as God sees us.

In the first two chapters of the letter by Paul to the church at Ephesus, he outlines for us as God's children how God sees us. Reading these two chapters of God's Word is a great place to begin a listing on who we are in Christ. Making a list on paper of how God sees us is the beginning of diffusing the negative emotional messages that Satan sends us daily. Chapters one and two of Ephesians tell us that we were chosen in Christ before the creation of the world (1:4), we are holy and blameless in His sight (1:4), we are adopted by Him (1:5), we have freely been given His grace (1:6), we are redeemed through His blood (1:7), and the list goes on!

When we use Ephesians to make a list of how God sees us, our perspective on God's view of us brightens and grows. The initial feeling is one of warmth and reassurance. But many of us experience another feeling when we look at the truth of how God sees us. That feeling is doubt that God's truth applies to us. Even though

He said all those things in Scripture, our emotions can be so strong that we may be unable to feel God's truth as it applies to us.

*Pray for the Holy Spirit to peel away layers of pain so that hurt and disappointment can be diffused.* Bringing our inventories and disappointing emotions before God in hindsight is an opportunity for letting the Lord begin to peel away layers of pain and to heal our hurts. My prayer has always been a very simple one: "Lord Jesus, you know the hurt this painful event caused in my life. You know that Satan is using this event to destroy my service to you. I cannot see myself as you see me in your Word. Please let your Holy Spirit peel away the emotions that Satan intends for me and replace them with the truth of how you see me in Ephesians. And Lord, I'll wait patiently for you to heal me in your time. Amen." God's Word tells us that He will, in time, answer this prayer as we remain faithful daily to come to Him and ask Him to peel back the layers of hurt that others have caused us.

*Pray for forgiveness of others who have caused your hurt or pain.* It is always difficult to disagree agreeably when we have not forgiven others. Again, a heart to forgive others is given to us by God and is there for the asking. Many have said that they cannot forgive others who have caused them pain. God is in the business of healing, restoring, and reconciling His children to one another. He will grant us the ability to forgive and love others. Our part is to be diligent in asking for the Holy Spirit's intervention.

As God begins to heal us and as the power of forgiveness is granted to us, we begin to move supernaturally to a position of godly strength. It is from here that we can begin to resolve conflict externally with others and to disagree agreeably.

## External Conflict Resolution

As we daily ask God to peel away our hurts and as God grants us His strength, the process of disagreeing agreeably becomes much easier. We are better able to approach others in an attitude of love and respect, and this attitude leads to a much greater chance of healthy conflict

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resolution. Resolving conflict with others involves the following actions:

- Affirm the one who has hurt you.
- Build a platform for dialogue.
- Share your thoughts and feelings clearly.
- Accept that others will not always agree with you.

*Affirm the one who has hurt you.* When going to another to resolve conflict, the first step is to affirm the other person. If you cannot affirm the person, you have not processed enough of the conflict internally. Affirmation communicates respect and diffuses the defensiveness of the perceived offender. Affirmation should not be flowery or wordy. A simple, specific, and sincere statement is all that is needed. Communicating appreciation disarms conflict.

*Build a platform for dialogue.* Instead of insisting the topic of tension be discussed, ask the other person if the issue may be discussed. Allow the other person to be

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a willing participant in the discussion versus insisting he or she be a part of the discussion at the time of your choosing. A good example of how to do this would be to say, “Something occurred [or was said] yesterday that I just don’t understand. Could we talk about it?”

Building a platform for dialogue also communicates respect. Most people do not get out of bed each day trying to make enemies. Most of us really are trying to serve the Lord and would enjoy as many friends and colleagues on the journey as possible. If approached in a manner that communicates respect, most people are happy to hear our thoughts and feelings and are willing to rectify wrongs.

*Share your thoughts and feelings clearly.* Talk with the other person about the event and share how the event affected you emotionally. Focus on how the event made you feel and not on communicating the wrongdoing of the other person. Most people are willing to make changes if approached in a manner that allows them to do so.

When sharing feelings about an event, talk about only one issue at a time. Discussing multiple issues confuses the matter and leads to circular arguments. These are



essentially blame sessions: two people finding fault with each other about multiple issues and never resolving any of them.

*Accept that others will not always agree with you.* What happens if we have done our best to follow a set of simple guidelines to resolve conflict and others simply will not see or hear our point? We can rest in the knowledge that we have demonstrated integrity in loving one another and doing our best to honor God in how we live and work with others. We are not guaranteed that others will demonstrate the same level of integrity when they are seen as the offender. In this case, remember that we always have the process of internal conflict resolution to go back to. The Lord will grant us the ability to love others as He peels away layers of pain. All we have to do is be faithful in asking Him to do so. A God-given heart of peace has won over many a disagreeable person, and this same heart of peace has won many to Christ.

What happens if someone sees us as the offender? Our task is to exhibit integrity by listening to how we have hurt the person and be willing to make changes in the way we do things ourselves. Many a leader has won the loyalty of others by the willingness to listen and honor the thoughts and feelings of others.

Disagreeing agreeably is something only the Lord can empower us to do. Having simple guidelines for functioning more effectively with others empowers us to walk honorably and in integrity as we partner in the Lord’s work with other imperfect human beings.

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