

Agreement about Disagreements

Welcome to Harvest Community Church

Series: The Power of Agreement

Text: 2 Corinthians 12:12, 1 Thessalonians 5:15

(This lesson is developed from teachings by Chuck Swindoll)

Walking in the Power of Agreement does not mean that there will never be times that we have to deal with disagreement, poor communication or misunderstandings. The idea of this series is to help us become better **communicators**, better at being peacemakers and better at knowing how to deal with difficult people and situations. **Matthew 5:9 (NKJV & AMP)** The truth is that as much as we endeavor to be led by the Holy Spirit and as much as we desire to communicate with excellence, life is not an exact science.

Four Facts that we need to remember.

- 1) Disagreements are **inevitable**.

As much as we may pursue peace, and as positive and **tactful** as we may try to be, there will still be occasions when disagreements arise. **Romans 12:18** The wonderful thing about the body of Christ and all of God's creation is that there is variety and individuality. The beautiful thing is that are all connected and need one another. The downside is that there is variety and individuality and that we are all interconnected. God created us so that there would, at times, be **tension** that forces us to work together. This leaves the door open for differing opinions.

There is a downside only because those inevitable differences can lead to strong disagreements. There will be opposing viewpoints and a variety of perspectives on most subjects; tastes differ as well as **preferences**. That is why they make vanilla and chocolate and strawberry ice cream, why they build Fords and Chevys, Chryslers and Cadillacs, Hondas and Toyotas. That is why our nation has room for Democrats and Republicans, conservatives and liberals, and moderates. The tension is built into our system. It is what freedom is all about, including religious freedom.

We need to be **solid** in our theological convictions, but that doesn't mean you (or anyone) must agree with me. All this explains why we place so much importance on leaving "wiggle room" in our relationships. One's theological persuasion may not bend, but one's involvements with others must. We are in need of leaving "wiggle room" if we hope to relieve steam from inevitable tensions. **1 Corinthians 9:19-23** This has to do with relating with people not becoming a chameleon or with compromise.

- 2) Even the **godly** will sometimes disagree.

When I was younger, I had difficulty with this one. I couldn't understand how two people who loved the Lord with equal passion and who believed the Bible with equal zeal could come to different conclusions. In my two-by-four mind I was convinced that all godly minds held to identical conclusions. Not so! To my amazement, I soon discovered that there were not only various opinions on the same subject, but that God had the audacity to **bless** those who disagreed with me.

Dr. Bob Cook, while he was president of The King's College wisely said, - "God reserves the right to use people who disagree with me." I'll go one step further, for I am now convinced that God is not nearly so narrow as many of His people are. I find that God is much easier to live with than most of His followers . . . far more tolerant, certainly full of more grace and forgiveness than all of us are.

When God forgives, He forgets the transgression and removes it as far as east is from west. Perhaps you have heard of the man who loved the Lord, but he couldn't seem to conquer a particular sin. Time and again through the week he would come before the Lord and confess the same transgression. In all sincerity, he would tell God how much he hated what he had done and how grateful he was for God's grace in forgiving him. Wouldn't you know it, by Saturday of that same struggling week he was back on his knees: "Here I come again, Lord, with the same sin . . . asking Your forgiveness and claiming Your cleansing." To his surprise, he heard God's audible answer: "What sin?"

There will be no denominations in heaven, no categories of Christians—only the vast company of the saints . Only then will there be perfect harmony of heart and complete unanimity of agreement. Until then, count on it, even the godly will disagree.

- 3) In every disagreement there are the same two ingredients:
 - a) an issue
 - b) various viewpoints

The issue is usually objective and involves principles .
The viewpoints are subjective and involve personalities .

This is the sum and substance of a clash, which could be defined as a disagreement over an issue because of opposing points of view. I will be candid with you: Every time I have remembered those two basic ingredients in the midst of a disagreement, I have been able to keep calm and think clearly . When I have forgotten them, almost without exception I have failed to negotiate my way through the clash with wisdom. Furthermore, I have regretted something I said in the heat of verbal exchange. Those two simple ingredients have never failed to help me keep cool.

- 4) In many (not all) disagreements each side has valid points.
As "liberal" as you may think that sounds, chew on it before you toss it aside. On numerous occasions when I have encountered a brother or sister who felt as strongly as I about the other side of the argument, I came to realize it was not so much an I-am-right-and-you-are-wrong matter as it was an I-see-it-from-this-perspective-and-you-from-that-perspective matter.

Both sides of most disagreements have strengths and weaknesses, which means neither side is an airtight slam dunk. Nevertheless, any disagreement can lead to a serious, permanent rift in a relationship . . . and sometimes (this may surprise you) that is God's will. There are times God chooses to spread the good news of His Son rapidly in different directions by having two capable servants of His have a major disagreement. As they separate and minister effectively in two different locations, He accomplishes a greater objective than if they were in agreement.

Points on handling Disagreements with Grace

- ❖ Always leave **room** for an opposing viewpoint.

If you don't have room for an opposing viewpoint, you're not going to do well when you get teenagers. Teens can be among our best teachers. I know ours have been. They haven't always been right, nor have I. However, I have learned in rearing teenagers that they are great at pointing out another point of view, if nothing else than just to make me think, just to challenge me, just to remind me that there is another way of viewing things. I can assure you, it has helped me in my ministry. It has certainly helped me in my relationship with those to whom I am personally accountable. Opposition is good for our **humility**.

- ❖ If an argument must occur, don't **assassinate**.

An argument—even a strong clash—is one thing, but killing folks is another. I have seen individuals in an argument verbally hit below the belt and assault another's character. I've seen a lot of mudslinging happen in arguments related to the work of the church. I've seen brutal character assassinations occur in the name of religion—in public speaking as well as in writing—and they are all ugly memories. No need for that. If we must fight, let's fight fair.

- ❖ If you don't get your way, get over it and **get on** with life.

If you don't get your way in a vote at a church or in the nation, get over it. The vote was taken (if the church has integrity or a country has integrity, the vote was handled with fairness), now get on with it. Just press on. And don't rehearse the fight or the vote year after year. (Remember there will be other votes) This does not **prevent** us from knowing what is right or doing what is right and righteous.

The work of God slows down when we are not big enough to take it on the chin and say, "We lost!" Be **big** enough to say, "We lost." Then move on in the grace, graciousness and power of God.

- ❖ Sometimes the best solution is a **separation**.

There is good biblical support for this, remember. Paul and Barnabas simply couldn't go on together, so they separated. If I can't go on with the way things are in a particular ministry, a job or a relationship then I need to resign! (Marriage is an entirely different situation)

In doing so I should not drag people through my **unresolved** conflicts because I didn't get my way. If separation is the best solution, doing it **graciously** is essential. Being gracious deals with our words, attitudes and actions. If your disagreements are starting to outweigh your agreements, you ought to give strong consideration to pulling out. This is not quitting. It is strategic repositioning that leaves room for reconciliation. This is called agreeing to disagree without being disagreeable.