

Coronavirus? Politics? Religion?

Agreeably Disagreeing

by BJ Rudge, Ph.D.

In teaching a college course on ethics for several years, I have learned that disagreements are part of being human. I tell my students that while it's OK to disagree, they must do this without becoming disagreeable. I lay out guidelines on how to appropriately do this within the controversial world of ethics.

Disagreements Among Christians

Apart from classroom discussions on ethics, disagreement is a part of everyday living, even impacting the church. The apostle Paul acknowledged this when he wrote his first epistle to the church at Corinth to address conflicts amongst its members:

I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. For it has been reported to me that there is quarreling [disagreements] among you (1 Corinthians 1:10, 11).

Paul goes on to say that God allows disagreements in the church so that over time it will reveal those who truly belong to Him, "... for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized" (1 Corinthians 11:19).

Biblical Principles of Resolving Disagreements

Since we cannot avoid disagreements, how can we as Christians disagree without becoming disagreeable? Just as I provide guidelines for my students, God's Word provides guidelines for us.

1. Non-Essentials

An issue of contention in the early church was whether or not people could eat meat that was sacrificed to idols. While this makes little sense to us today, it was an important issue back then. Paul's comment on this was:

As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions.

One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. Let not the one who eats despise the

one who abstains and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him (Romans 14:1-3).

Paul wants us to recognize that we should not allow disunity to occur within the body of Christ over non-essential issues. Matters that are not clearly laid out in Scripture should never cause us to despise each other (Romans 14:10), as one day each of us will give an account to God who is the ultimate judge (Romans 14:12).

2. Appropriate Steps

When someone says or does something that offends or hurts us, we often *react* rather than *respond*. This reaction can be direct, as when we openly attack their character or motives, or indirect as when we allow anger and bitterness toward them to fester in our hearts. Instead, we need to respond biblically when a brother or sister hurts us. Consider these words by Jesus:

If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother

(Matthew 18:15).

In other words, the first step to take in dealing with a disagreement is to talk with the other person privately. Face to face is how we biblically deal with disagreements – not talking behind each other's back or posting comments on social media. Jesus then provides additional steps if the issue cannot be resolved on a personal level, or if it is an essential issue that needs to be addressed to maintain the spiritual health of the body of Christ.

If a brother or sister takes the biblical step to seek true restoration with you, keep in mind Peter's conversation with Jesus:

Then Peter came up and said to Him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times" (Matthew 18:21, 22).

3. Demonstrating Genuine Love

In the book of Ephesians, the apostle Paul gave thanks



because he had heard of their faith in the Lord Jesus and their love for each other. The Greek word for love in this passage describes the deep affection that they possessed. Paul rejoiced because this love was an outward sign of their inner faith in Jesus Christ; a confirmation that the Apostle John said should be evident in any true believer:

If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him: whoever loves God must also love his brother (1 John 4:20, 21).

This demonstration of love for each other is not only a personal indicator that confirms our own salvation, it is also an indicator to the world that you are a disciple of Jesus Christ. In the words of Jesus:

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another (John 13:34, 35).

A love for each other is the most powerful way we can live out our faith, especially as we deal with disagreements.

4. Desiring God’s Glory

Oftentimes if we do get into a disagreement, we find ourselves driven to prove ourselves right and the other person wrong. While there are times when we must stand for what is right and true, we should never be driven by the sole desire to always prove we are right. Rather, our ultimate desire in whatever we do should be for God’s name to be glorified. Jesus demonstrated this attitude as He prepared to go to the cross:

Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me. Nevertheless, not My will, but Yours, be done (Luke 22:42).

As Paul sat in prison awaiting his eventual fate, he also yearned for God to be glorified:

As it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death (Philippians 1:20).

We must also possess this same desire for God’s glory! Even if this means losing an argument or dealing with some form of injustice, may we say like Jesus, “Not My will but Your will be done,” and like Paul, may “Christ be honored.”

Today’s Challenge

Just as in the early church, this pandemic has shown that as believers we still disagree over issues. The only difference is instead of disagreeing about eating meat sacrificed to idols, we now disagree about the role of government and how to appropriately exercise our freedoms. As we navigate this, the world is watching: While they may see us disagree in our response to this pandemic, may they not see us being disagreeable. May we show them that we are people who do not divide over non-essentials (should I wear a mask or not, should we close our church doors or not...) and who do not slander and gossip about each other on social media. Instead, let us express genuine love for each other, and desire to see God glorified in our actions.

When I was a high school soccer coach, we adopted the redwood tree as our logo. It was a reminder to us of the power of being connected as one. Despite its height, redwood trees have a shallow root system. But what makes them strong is that their roots spread out and interconnect with the root system of other redwood trees. When the wind blows it does not blow against one lonely tree, but against a whole forest. This is what Christian brothers and sisters should represent to the world – a unified body that is interconnected by the person of Jesus Christ.

If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together (1 Corinthians 12:26). 🦋

Sneak Peek

Pray for BJ as he launches Living Truth For Today, a new branch of the ministry this summer. Take a sneak peak at some of the videos he has uploaded onto his YouTube page, Living Truth For Today. Also, pray that God provides the needed production equipment, as well as someone to assist with editing. Join us in prayer for God to anoint and use this new aspect of our ministry to touch many lives for Christ and strengthen the faith of believers.

Media Equipment Needed

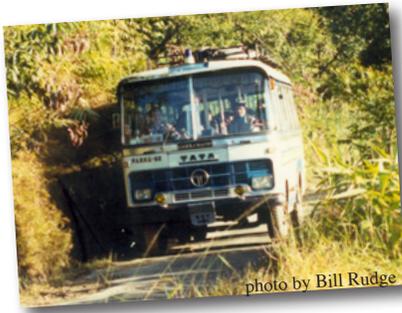
Special thanks to Dan Stockdale who recently donated \$1,000 (above and beyond his regular support) to help BJ purchase media equipment for his video ministry. We still need a new computer and software (for making better quality videos, as well as helping to produce multimedia presentations, web sites, newsletters, E-books, pamphlets, audio messages, and other projects. We are praying that one or more churches or individuals will take on this crucial project (\$4,000) to help us expand our national and global outreach.



Sisters, Ginny Marsteller and Lois Greathouse, work on the mailing list and receipts. Several others (Ruth Ischo, Karen Rudge, Tabitha Smith and Scott Young) help with getting the newsletters to you.

A Near Miss in the Himalayas

by Bill Rudge



After speaking at a convention in the Himalayas of northern India, my team and I were making our way down the winding mountain roads as we headed to Calcutta. We stopped in the village of Darjeeling.

Standing in the middle of a narrow road for a more panoramic view, my son and I surveyed this Himalayan village deciding which direction to go. Suddenly a bus came speeding around a sharp curve, heading straight toward us. Horn blaring, the bus maintained its speed as it rushed nearer and nearer with no sign of slowing down.

Sizing up the situation, I glanced to my right and left. Instinctively grabbing BJ, my then thirteen-year-old son, I quickly tried pulling him to the left, but his impulse was to go in the opposite direction. Adjusting my momentum to accommodate his motion, I pushed him to the right. Simultaneously, he acted on my initial tug by moving toward the left! There we were in the middle of the road going in circles as this huge bus came bearing down on us. I could have jumped out of the way to save my life, but I promised my wife I would bring our son back alive. If he was going to die, then I was going to die with him, so I hung on.

With adrenaline flowing and my heart pounding, thoughts of how we were both going to be killed flooded my mind, because buses in the Himalayas are notorious for not stopping for pedestrians. I personally have seen them barrel down the road, stopping for no one: young and old alike rushing to step aside or leaping to safety seconds before the bus sped by, missing them by inches.

Realizing this, our situation was desperate. Then, by the grace of God, the driver realized we really were in trouble and to our amazement, suddenly slammed on the brakes and slid to a stop no more than two feet in front of us. I remember standing there in the middle of the street after it was all over, looking at the flat front of the bus directly ahead of me thinking, "I could not even have jumped on its hood to get thrown to the side. It would have hit us, dropped us in the street, and then run over us! We would have had no hope for survival." Thank God for His mercy and protection!

The point of this illustration is that when our heavenly

Father is leading us in one direction, and we insist on going in another, then dangerous and sometimes fatal consequences occur. Rather than going around in circles in your life, take your lead from the Lord.

Four Options

When I was involved in the martial arts (before the Lord led me out) the easiest way for me to lead someone's body was to lead their head. Wherever their head went, their body would follow. I used to demonstrate this with a volunteer from the audience. It was easy to lead a person who was submissive and yielded. But if they would stiffen their neck and resist, I would explain my choices:

1. I could exert more force and possibly injure his neck.
2. I could break his stiff neck.
3. I could knock him unconscious and then drag him wherever I wanted.
4. I could let him go his own way and bang his head against the wall, or against my knee, or whatever, as a natural consequence of his resistance.

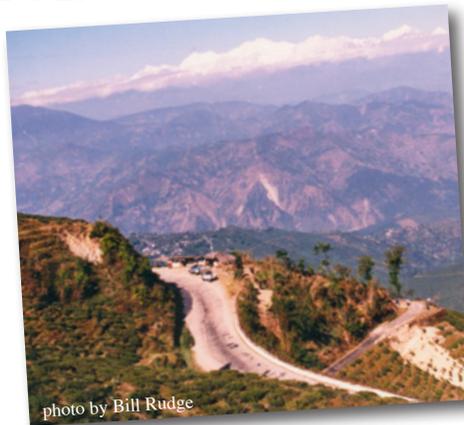
When we resist the Lord's will and refuse to submit, He also has choices:

1. He can exert more pressure in our lives to get our attention.
2. He can break our stiff necks and rebellious wills by humbling us.
3. He can knock us unconscious by not using us anymore or allow Satan to render us ineffective.
4. He can let us go our own rebellious ways and reap the consequences, until we learn and are ready to yield to His lead.

One Reassuring Fact

It is reassuring to know that when you remain yielded, available and surrendered to God, it is impossible for you to get too far out of line. If you get involved with a practice or belief that is unacceptable to Him, He will speak to your heart through His Word and Spirit, and the Great Shepherd will guide and direct you back to the path of righteousness.

The problem starts when you become insensitive, stiff-necked, obstinate and hardhearted. This kind of rebellious attitude before the Lord, carries one promise – that of reaping what you have sown. But when you are sensitive and yielded to the Spirit of God and obedient to His Word, you have the promise of eventual victory, blessing and of all things working together for good. You will be aware of God working in your life to achieve the purpose and potential He has for you. 🦋



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WHO WILL GO?

by Bruce Miller

It's called the "Great Commission,"

Just who's supposed to go?

You'll find the answer on your knees

If you really want to know.

The harvest has been ready,

And the fields are very ripe;

Pray to the Lord for laborers,

Willing to share the light.

It seems today, and always has,

The ones that go are few;

It's written in the book of Luke

In chapter ten, verse two.

Some say, "I'm just too busy,"

Or, "The timing isn't right."

Lift your eyes; look around;

The harvest is already white.

When you see Jesus face to face,

And He asks, "What did you do?"

I hope and pray your answer is,

"I labored, Lord, for you."



Beverly and Bruce Miller stand in Bill's office holding Bruce's new book, *Poems of Conviction*. They donated a box of these books for us to give to BRM donors who request one. Just check the appropriate box on the enclosed insert to receive your copy.

The following poem, *Who Will Go*, is just one of many in this insightful book that will challenge and encourage you.

New Address?

Please help us be good stewards by reporting address changes to us.

Our ongoing prayer for this ministry is:

"Lord, use us to turn the hearts of Your people back to You and anoint us to inspire them to walk in endurance and faithfulness until You return."

– Bill Rudge

The Servant's Reward

One day, when you are in heaven, someone will come up to you and thank you for the way you touched their life with hope and encouragement. The person's words will take you by surprise. Soon another person will seek you out, and then another, and another. As you listen to each one's story, you will begin to discover all the ways that God used your life when you were completely unaware of it. You will find that it was not only through the big things you did, but also through the small things – through a spoken word that was not planned, a spontaneous act of kindness, a loving attitude, or a simple prayer of concern.

To your joy, you will discover that in all these ways and more, God used you to deposit an eternal measure of His love into many needy hearts.

– Roy Lessin

Receipts

Receipts for donations received January 1 - June 30 will be mailed in July. This helps us maximize funds while maintaining strict integrity in receipting donations. May the Lord bless you for your generosity and faithfulness in helping us reach this world for Christ. We are so blessed to have you as ministry partners!

In Memory Of

Rev. Guy Bongiovanni
by Esther Bongiovanni

Bill and Violette Fleming
by Paula Emery

In Honor Of

My Mom, Barbara Lein
by Dale Lein (Son)

Explore our website
www.billrudge.org

Ancient Wisdom for Today

Jim Weikal

Today's world system is on a collision course with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The prophet Micah wrote in his day that no upright person can be found, judges take bribes, politicians seek their own desires, words spoken can be words used to betray, no one can be trusted even in an individual's own household (Micah 7:2-6). The insidious evil that Micah wrote about in his day is here in our day. So what is a believer to do?

I will watch expectantly for the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me.

Do not rejoice over me, O my enemy. Though I fall I will rise; though I dwell in darkness, the LORD is a light for me (Micah 7:7-8).

1) Expectantly keep watch for the Lord. **2)** Continuously put your hope in the Lord. **3)** Know that the Lord hears you and knows your circumstances. **4)** He is a light for you in the darkness.

As David said in Psalm 23:6: "Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever."

THANKS!

We so appreciate the many individuals, businesses and churches whose faithful support and special gifts have kept this ministry going in the midst of this crucial time in the history of our nation. Thanks for enabling us to expand our efforts to share the love and truth of Jesus Christ in our area, across the U.S. and throughout the world!

Please continue to stand with us. Your prayers and financial support are invaluable. Our promise is to be wise stewards with the resources entrusted into our care and to maximize them to advance His Kingdom. We will always strive to operate this ministry as the Lord leads and according to the principles in God's Word.

May the Lord abundantly bless you for your faithfulness to Him and for your generous and sacrificial support of this ministry!

– BRM