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AGREED ?

How would you like your latest disagreement with someone to appear in print for all to read? Not just on someone's tweet or blog, but in the best-selling book of all time. That's what happened to two women at the first church of Philippi.

The Apostle Paul writes about it in Philippians 4:1-3. ***"Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved. I entreat Euodia and I entreat Synteché to agree in the Lord. Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life."***

He packages unpleasant things inside pleasant words. In chapter 2 he said be of "one mind" and full accord in Christ as you look to the interests of others. In chapter 3 he said be of "one mind" as you strive together side-by-side for the Gospel.

When we have inter-personal problems, we mess up our message about Christ. Disagreements spread as people pick sides, even when they don't know half the real story. Notice Paul doesn't say who's right and who's wrong. But he puts responsibility on each person as he pleads to "agree in the Lord." It matters more who makes the effort to reconcile than who was more at fault. Look at the big picture. Your petty personal perspective isn't the whole story. Let the Lord of the church handle the problem.

Step 1, don't be so touchy. Luke 17:3 says ***"Pay attention to yourselves. If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him."*** Don't let things get out of hand. 1 Peter 4:8 says ***"love covers a multitude of sins."*** The goal of reconciliation is restoration of relationship.

Step 2, you go first. Take the initiative. Matthew 5:23 says ***"first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift"*** at the altar. Don't kid yourself. God knows what's going on. Do what YOU can to resolve a problem. It works the other way too. Matthew 18:15-20 says ***"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."***

Don't first go talk with someone else about the problem. That would be gossip and grumbling. If someone says to you "isn't it awful how so and so did such and such?" your response should be "well, have you talked with HIM or HER about it?" That should stop miscommunication in its tracks.

If there is a real problem, Matthew 18 continues, ***"But if the offender does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector."***

The harsh reality is that some people refuse to reconcile. But God wants His humble people to help them according to Scripture. That's **Step 3, fix the problem not the blame.** Usually both disagreeing parties are partly wrong. It's often a misunderstanding about what they meant. Busybodies won't help, but "true yokefellows" who have unity of mind in the Lord can be a big help by appealing to God's Word. Read Leviticus 19:17 and 1 Corinthians 12:24 and James 5:20 and Galatians 6:1-10 and Matthew 7:5.

Step 4, be careful from then on. Especially if someone won't reconcile, you want to avoid further trouble. If you've followed Scripture, you are not responsible for their refusal. But you are responsible for your response. Things may never be the same with that person. It may mean setting boundaries, and forgiving but not forgetting. Don't make the same mistakes that caused trouble before. It can take a long time to rebuild trust. A good resource is www.Peacemaker.net where you'll find lots of help to "agree in the Lord."

Christians must "agree in the Lord" to show and tell the Gospel together. This replaces the lies of the world, the flesh, and the devil with the truth of God's Word. May this be true of you today!