

Keeping It Holy When You Disagree

Disagreements are inevitable. Whether we're at a social gathering, discussing politics, or debating hot-button topics like climate change or vaccines, differing opinions will arise. In today's "speak your mind" culture, it's easy to become embroiled in heated arguments. But as Christians, we're called to a higher standard in our interactions with others.

The Bible provides guidance on how we can navigate disagreements in a way that honors God and maintains our witness. Here are four principles that are both biblically sound and conveniently applicable to everyday living, for disagreeing but being able to keep it holy.

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1. Hear first, then speak. One of the most overlooked aspects of healthy disagreement is the importance of listening. We often enter conversations with the goal of making our point, but the Bible encourages us to listen to hear first, then speak second. James 1:19 (MEV) instructs, "My beloved brothers, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger." It is important to hear others before we respond, especially in moments of tension and conflict.

Listening well means giving the other person our full attention, being fully present in the moment and genuinely trying to understand their perspective. Too often, we listen with the intent of formulating a rebuttal before the other person is even finished speaking, rather than truly engaging with what the other person is saying. Proverbs 18:13 warns, "He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him." When we fail to listen, we risk responding in

ways that are unhelpful or even hurtful because we haven't fully grasped the other person's point of view.



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Active listening not only helps us understand the other person's perspective but also diffuses tension. When people feel heard, they are less likely to become defensive or combative. Listening shows respect and demonstrates that we value the other person, especially when we disagree with them. Proverbs 1:5 reminds us, "A wise man will hear and will increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel." We can always learn something from others, even—sometimes especially—when we don't see eye to eye.

In addition to listening more, we should also be careful with our words. Proverbs 10:19 (BSB) tells us, "When words are many, sin is unavoidable, but he who restrains his lips is wise." Sometimes, saying less can be more effective than filling the conversation with arguments and rebuttals. We must choose our words carefully, ensuring that they are thoughtful, respectful and in line with God's Word. What better way to begin hearing first than by speaking less?

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