

How to Be the Bigger Person

God puts us in relationships with all kinds of people. We think differently, and we have different personalities, interests and ideas. God made us that way on purpose. And although everyone is not like us, He still wants us all to get along.

I love what the apostle Paul says in Philippians 2:2 (AMPC): “Fill up *and* complete my joy by living in harmony *and* being of the same mind *and* one in purpose, having the same love, being in full accord and of one harmonious mind *and* intention.”

To put this verse in perspective, Paul was dealing with people who seemed to be in continual disagreement. If you’ve raised two or more children, I’m sure you know exactly what he’s talking about. Sometimes you’d give anything for a little peace and quiet!

Oddly, the people we usually disagree with the most are the ones we care the most about—our spouses, family members, close friends and co-workers. And if we’re asking God to bring healing into any of those relationships or make them better, we need to partner with Him to make it happen.

We need to learn how to control our emotions and stay out of strife. “Strife” is an old-fashioned word for bickering, arguing or a heated disagreement, and it carries an angry undercurrent.

Have you ever been around someone who’s pretending everything’s OK, but you can tell that on the inside they’re seething with anger? Have you ever *been* that person?

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Think about it. How long do you stay mad when someone mistreats you? How easy is it for you to get frustrated with someone? When you have a disagreement, do you have the need to always be right?

Strife is extremely dangerous. It can destroy marriages, families, relationships and even churches. If it isn't stopped, it will continue to go from person to person, causing all kinds of problems and unnecessary pain.

It's not easy to hear, but the Bible says we are still under the control of the flesh as long as we are envious and jealous of others and there is arguing among us (1 Cor. 3:3).

When the Bible talks about "the flesh," it is referring to the parts of our souls and bodies that we have not yet surrendered to God—things such as bad attitudes, selfishness, strife, anger, fear, unforgiveness, lust, addictions and anything else that leads to sin.

The minute we begin to sense envy or jealousy within us or an urge to be offended, we need to make a decision to put our feelings aside and say, "I am not offended."

If we don't do this—and instead just stuff it down inside of us—little things become giants in our lives. Then before we know it, we're angry, bitter, resentful people, going to church every week but not acting any different than the rest of the world.

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God wants us to care more about maintaining peace in our relationships than we care about being right. And He wants us to have a good attitude even when we don't get our way.

Acts 13:22c says God is looking for those who will "carry out My program fully," and part of that is learning to forgive

quickly, frequently and thoroughly.

When you have a conflict, you need to do your part to resolve it no matter what the other person chooses to do. Someone has to choose to be humble and apologize first—and as a Christian, that very often means *you*.

If you've been through some tough times in your relationships, you probably know that being right is highly overrated. We're not likely to agree with each other by accident because we're all different, so we need to put a real effort into creating an atmosphere of unity.

And where there's unity, there is blessing (Ps. 133). When people are unified and agree, it brings peace and power.

I can promise you there will be opportunities to be offended. You may even be tempted to have an all-out fit. But before that even happens, I encourage you to set your mind to be the bigger person. Why? Because when we do, we can have the healthy relationships God wants us to have.

We're not ever going to be perfect like Jesus, but we can get better at loving imperfect people.

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