

# Joyce Meyer: Getting Along When Differences Get in the Way

You've probably noticed that every person is not the same. Each of us has a unique personality with various likes and dislikes. And while we are often drawn to people who are different than we are, it's these differences that can lead to strife in our relationships.

Sometimes we try to convince others to be more like us, but that's not what the Bible teaches us to do. We're all created for freedom and liberty, and if we want to have healthy relationships with people, we need to give them the freedom to be who they are.

I can't tell you how many years I tried to get my husband, Dave, to stop watching sports. But it seemed the more I tried, the worse it got. One Saturday afternoon, I walked into the family room to find him shining his golf clubs while he watched one game on TV and listened to another game using his headphones. I thought, *Joyce, your plan is just not working!*

The truth is I wanted Dave to do what *I* wanted to do—I wanted him to be more like me. But trying to change him wasn't accomplishing anything, and it left me frustrated and upset.

I love what Romans 12:16 (AMPC) says: "Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty (snobbish, high-minded, exclusive), but readily adjust yourself to [people, things]...."

It's impossible to be selfish and have healthy relationships. If we truly want to live in peace and harmony, it's going to require some give and take. At times, we'll have to adjust our lives to accommodate someone else's needs or desires.

Sometimes this simply means being patient and understanding with those who don't share your own strengths. For instance, have you ever noticed yourself getting irritated with someone who takes more time to make decisions than you do? Or maybe they don't catch on to things as quickly as you would like.

If we allow ourselves to get into prideful thinking, we can hurt people by acting out of our own self-importance and selfish interests. The Lord doesn't want us to have a lowly opinion of ourselves, but He certainly doesn't want us to think we're better than anyone else!

First Corinthians chapter 12 provides the perfect illustration. It says we are all part of one body, each with our own distinct and important role to play. Verse 25 (NIV) tells us, "there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each another."

We all need each other, and when we learn to recognize and appreciate each other's talents and abilities, it develops a respect that can strengthen and heal our relationships.

Let's make this practical: When I'm having a hard time accepting someone's differences or agreeing with others, there are a few things I try to do to maintain the right attitude:

When you need to confront someone about a problem or discuss a negative issue, choose your timing wisely. Pray about what to say and ask God to lead you in each conversation.

- Be respectful, even if the other person doesn't agree with your opinion.
- Listen with an open mind. Be willing to pray about what they say.
- Look for things to agree about, instead of focusing on your differences.
- Use positive body language and voice tones, and choose every

word with care.

There will be times when you won't find a thing to agree on, and in those circumstances, the best thing you can do is trust God, let it go and become an expert at forgiveness.

Yes, some things are very important and you need to stand your ground, but there are so many things in life that just don't make a difference.

The bottom line is you won't always agree with your spouse, family or friends, but you can still respect and appreciate them. I don't agree with Dave about all his opinions or 100 percent of everything he does, but I *do* agree with Dave. He's a good man, and I love him and value his character and principles. Over the years, we've learned how to "disagree agreeably."

I encourage you to trust God with the people in your life. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you see the positive in your relationships and the things you have in common. And as you do your part to "keep the peace," God will not only honor your commitment; He will also bless your life in greater ways than you can imagine. {eo}

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