

The Kingdom Way to Enjoy Healthier Relationships

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 our spouses, coworkers and kids 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 win with people, we need to give them a right 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 polishing 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 12:16a (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 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 (AMPC) tells us "there should be no division or discord ... but the members all alike should have a mutual interest in and care for one another."

The truth is we all need each other, and when we learn to recognize and celebrate each other's gifts, it develops a respect that can heal our relationships.

For Best Results, Try This

When I'm having a hard time agreeing with others, there are a few things I try to do to maintain the right attitude. I encourage you to try them yourself.

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.

Keep looking 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.

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 agree with his character and principles. Over the years, we've learned how to "disagree agreeably."

You won't always agree with your spouse, family or friends, but you can still respect and appreciate them. 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.

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.

Nobody's perfect, but with God's help, we can begin to set aside our differences ... and love people for who they are.
{eoa}