

YOUTH LESSON:

5 Biblical Ways to Love Those You Disagree With

Everywhere we turn these days, there is an opportunity to take offense. It seems that overnight our world has changed and become more digitized than ever. At the same time, our country has become more politicized. Unless you live in complete isolation, devoid of any interaction with others online or in person, you are bound to find people you disagree with—and often the matter of contention is something that ignites strong emotion.

As Christians, we are not called to argue every topic and post our stances as statuses on social media. We are called to love others and be peacemakers. “Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14).

But *how* do we accomplish this with someone we strongly disagree with?

We can look to Scripture for guidance. In 1 Corinthians 13, we read what love is—and what it is not:

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.”

However, reading about something and actually putting it into action are two different things. Below are five ways we can walk out loving those we disagree with.

1. Listen

“My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry,” ([James 1:19](#))

We cannot say we are showing [love](#) if we do not first listen to what the other person has to say. While many people *think* they are listening, they are not listening with the right mindset or heart.

First, we must listen to understand, not argue. That means not only letting the other person speak, but also keeping ourselves from jumping to conclusions or thinking of what we are going to say next. When someone else is stating an opinion they feel passionately about, we need to listen with our mind, heart and spirit. Our goal in listening should not be to find points of argument, but instead we should look for things we have in common.

“To answer before listening — that is folly and shame” ([Proverbs 18:13](#)).

Another thing to keep in mind while listening is that our goal should also be to understand the heart of the person *beyond* their opinion. Strong positions on topics are often backed up not only by convictions but by past experiences. When we listen for the intent behind what a person says, we can find the source of the opinion they hold and thereby understand them better. When someone feels understood, they most often will also feel loved.

“Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves” ([Romans 12:9-10](#)).

2. Be Humble

“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves” ([Philippians 2:3](#)).

Humility is shown by the willingness to acknowledge we aren't always right or that there might be a better way. We can only learn from others when we have enough respect for them to consider what they have to say. In other words, we must see others as “more significant than ourselves.” Likewise, we must be willing to admit when we are wrong. [Proverbs 9:7-10](#) reads:

“Whoever corrects a mocker invites insults; whoever rebukes the wicked incurs abuse. Do not [rebuke](#) mockers or they will hate you; rebuke the wise and they will love you. Instruct the wise and they will be wiser still; teach the righteous and they will add to their learning. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”

When we read this [Scripture](#), our minds may immediately go to the mockers and wicked people we know, and so we interpret it to be instruction on how we should deal with them. While this is a valid point, we should also look in the mirror. Are *you* a mocker...or are you a wise person? A clue to the answer is how you respond to criticism. Do you listen and try to learn from it, or do you automatically defend yourself, quick to be spew an insult or sarcastic comment in return? Such responses do not show wisdom. They are not love and do not create peace.

3. Lament with the Brokenhearted

“The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit” ([Psalm 34:18](#)).

There are situations when we need to simply be present with those who are hurting, even if we cannot fully understand their pain. This might make us uncomfortable, especially if the pain seems to come from a vastly different point of view than ours. But if we are to be Christ-like in our love, our hearts should break with theirs.

The [Bible](#) is full of lamentations to God (the book of Job, many of the Psalms.) We can show love to those we disagree with if we come beside them in times of pain, despite our differences, and mourn with them.

“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen” ([Ephesians 4:29](#)).

Being with the brokenhearted helps us to empathize with their struggles. Understanding what they are experiencing can lead to compassion for them. From that perspective, we have the opportunity to love them by encouraging them with words of hope.

4. Pray

“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in [heaven](#). He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” ([Matthew 5:44-48](#)).

Praying for those we disagree with – including those who have hurled insults at us or who are so far from our point of view it feels like they live on a different planet – is what we are commanded to do. When we pray for our enemies, God may change them, but He is more likely to change us. This doesn’t mean our opinions will change, but it does mean we are likely to have more peace about the situation.

When we sincerely pray for others, it’s nearly impossible for a root of bitterness to grow in our hearts toward them. Instead of being quick to respond unkindly to our enemy, we can draw upon our relationship with God to respond to them with love and wisdom.

“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of the wise adorns knowledge, but the mouth of the fool gushes folly” ([Proverbs 15:1-2](#)).

5. Rejoice in the Truth

“Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” ([John 8:32](#)).

What if all attempts to show love and make peace with those we disagree with brings nothing but strife? We can’t control how another person responds to us — we can only control how we treat them. This can be especially heartbreaking when we are dealing with an unsaved person. We so desperately want them to know God. But you can’t argue someone into salvation. What we can do is put our [faith](#) in God. When we rejoice in God’s truth, despite the circumstances, we are demonstrating not only faith but love.

“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you” ([Ephesians 4:31-32](#)).

When we pray for those we disagree with, we shouldn’t pray that they will come to see *our* way, but that they would know God’s truth: that Jesus is the way, the truth and the light ([John 14:6](#)). Our ultimate hope should be to see the person who opposes us in [heaven](#), free from the trials and sins of this world. When we take an eternal perspective toward those we disagree with, we can be assured we are behaving as followers of Christ, and not as a spokesman for the issue of the day.

The Choice Is Yours

No matter what the issue of the day may be, we will always have someone who either opposes our position or who believes something that rankles us. Instead of getting angry,

taking offense, or pridefully defending our point of view, we can intentionally choose to show patience, love and goodwill. When we do, we are doing far more to change the world than posting a soon forgotten meme on Facebook.

“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity” ([Colossians 3:12-14](#)).