

Difficult People

We all know people whom we find difficult in one way or another, and we're all called upon to deal with difficult people at some time or another. A difficult person may be one who is condescending, argumentative, belligerent, selfish, flippant, obtuse, or simply rude. Difficult people seem to know just how to push one's buttons and stir up trouble. Therefore, dealing with difficult people becomes an exercise in patience, love, and grace.

Our response to difficult people should model the examples provided by Jesus, for He surely dealt with many difficult people during His time here on earth. In His interactions with difficult people, Jesus never displayed an attitude of harsh superiority or dismissive pride; rather, He showed authority under control. He used rebuke when necessary (John 8:47), but He also dealt with difficult people by remaining silent (John 8:6), asking questions (Mark 11:28–29), pointing them to Scripture (Mark 10:2–3), and telling a story (Luke 7:40–42).

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus was quite specific about dealing with difficult people in love and humility. It would do us good to go back and refresh our mind on what Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount, especially Luke 6:27-31.

In dealing with difficult people, we must guard against pride. It is important to recall the admonition given by the apostle Paul in Romans 12:3: "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."

Paul also said to the Church at Philippi, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Philippians 2:3-4).

So, when we know we must deal with a difficult person, we approach the situation in meekness. Knowing that we are to show God's love to everyone—including difficult people.

In fact, one of the principles that Jesus taught His apostles before He sent them out was, "I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matthew 10:16). If you read the context of this verse, you will find that the context is in the field of discernment. And discernment is taught as a standard throughout Scripture – we must always remember that God gives us certain standards that we must take into account when it comes to dealing with difficult people, when it comes to giving our time, and when it comes to giving our money, to others.

When the Bible tells us we are to help others, the purpose is never for us to do this to the point where it becomes detrimental (cf. II Thessalonians 3:10).

There are people who want to live an irresponsible lifestyle with absolutely no accountability. So there must be limits; we will help someone with a need, but if we see that it's become a chronic life pattern, it's wrong for us to continue to encourage that. It is very harmful to others to contribute to their indolence, laziness, and lack of effort.

The old saying, "Give a man a fish and he eats for a day, teach him to fish and he eats for a lifetime" is very true. As long as we see that someone is sincerely making an effort, we should be there to support him in whatever way God leads.

Take 31 days and read the book of Proverbs; it can help in these questionable areas of life!

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