

How to Get Along When You Don't See Eye to Eye



Romans 14:1-15:7

The Context

- Dispute was concerning diets, days & drinks.
- Mutual censures & uncharitable judgments prevailed among them.



The Application

The apostle Paul was not talking about the basic moral issues & core beliefs (Essentials)

He is clearly addressing the subject of Non-essentials: 3rd level issues

Principles about How to Disagree

1) Those who have freedom of conscience must not look down on those who don't.

“Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand” (Rom. 14:3-4).

Principles about How to Disagree

1) Those who have freedom of conscience must not look down on those who don't.

➤ To the strong: “Do not *despise* the weak”

- The Greek word means “regard with contempt”
- Connotes utter disdain & abhorrence



Principles about How to Disagree

2) Those whose conscience restricts them must not be judgmental toward those who have freedom (Rom.14:3b).

- To the weak: *“Do not judge the strong”*

The Greek word means *“finding an accused person guilty of a crime”* or *“to criticize”*



3 Reasons not to Despise or Judge

A. “God has welcomed him” (14:3c).

- Do you have the right to reject someone whom God has welcomed?
- If God Himself allows His people to hold different opinions on 3rd-level matters, should you force everyone to agree with you?

3 Reasons not to Despise or Judge

B. “Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another?” (14:4a).

- **You are not the the master of other believers.**
- **In matters of opinion, you must let God do His work.**
- **You just need to welcome your brother or sister (14:1-2).**

3 Reasons not to Despise or Judge

B. “Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another?” (14:4a).

- **Since we do not own one another, we should not judge one another.**
- **We do not have either the wisdom or the authority to judge one another.**
- **God alone is Judge.**

3 Reasons not to Despise or Judge

C. Do not judge each other in these matters because we will all someday stand before the judgment seat of God (14:10-12)

“Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written,

“As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.”

So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.”

3 Reasons not to Despise or Judge

C. Do not judge each other in these matters because we will all someday stand before the judgment seat of God (14:10-12)

- **In these matters where good Christians disagree, we just need to mind our own conscience and let God be the judge of others.**

Principles about How to Disagree

3) Assume that others are partaking or refraining for the glory of God (14:6-9).

“The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.”

Principles about How to Disagree

3) Assume that others are partaking or refraining for the glory of God (14:6-9).

- **Notice how generous Paul is to both sides.**
- **He assumes that both sides are exercising their freedoms or restrictions for the glory of God.**
- **They have different positions but the same motivation: to honour God.**

Principles about How to Disagree

4) Don't let your freedom destroy the faith of a weak brother (14:13-18).

“Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother. I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died.”

Principles about How to Disagree

4) Don't let your freedom destroy the faith of a weak brother (14:13-18).

- **The apostle places the bulk of responsibility on Christians who have a strong conscience because they have a choice in 3rd-level matters.**
- **We are to exercise our freedom and carry out our convictions in ways that do not cause our fellow Christians to stumble.**

Principles about How to Disagree

4) Don't let your freedom destroy the faith of a weak brother (14:13-18).

- **Strict Christians have a responsibility not to impose their conscience on everyone else in the church.**
- **It is a serious sin to try to bind someone else's conscience with rules that God does not clearly command.**

Late Dr. R.C. Sproul

“The manipulation of conscience can be a destructive force within the Christian community. Legalists are often masters of guilt manipulation, while antinomians master the art of quiet denial. The conscience is a delicate instrument that must be respected. One who seeks to influence the consciences of others carries a heavy responsibility to maintain the integrity of the other person’s own personality as crafted by God. When we impose false guilt on others, we paralyze our neighbors, binding them in chains where God has left them free. When we urge false innocence, we contribute to their delinquency, exposing them to the judgment of God.” [Excerpts from RC Sproul’s How Should I Live in This World?]

Principles about How to Disagree

4) Don't let your freedom destroy the faith of a weak brother (14:13-18).

- **Christians with a strong conscience must not allow their freedom to embolden a weaker brother or sister to sin against their conscience.**
- **How might your use of freedom bring spiritual harm to other believers?**

Douglas Moo

Paul isn't clear here, but Doug Moo suggests two main possibilities:

[1] Our engaging in an activity that another believer thinks to be wrong may encourage that other believer to do it as well. They would then be sinning because they are not acting "from faith" (v. 23).

[2] An ostentatious flaunting of liberty on a particular matter may so deeply offend someone that he or she may turn from the faith altogether.

Principles about How to Disagree

4) Don't let your freedom destroy the faith of a weak brother (14:13-18).

But note that the stumbling block principle does not teach that we must refrain from an activity that another believer may simply disagree with.

Douglas Moo

Moo highlights another common misunderstanding about the stumbling-block principle:

“In Christian books and from Christian pulpits one sometimes hears Romans 14 applied something like this: believers should refrain from drinking alcohol out of deference to other Christians who might be inclined to overindulge and abuse alcohol. Those other Christians are the weaker brothers and sisters—weak because they have a weakness for alcohol. The principle, of course, is valid enough.

Douglas Moo

Christians should recognize the weaknesses of fellow Christians and do what they can to keep them from succumbing to those weaknesses. But we must point out that this idea of “weakness” is not what Paul is talking about in Romans 14. The weak brother or sister in this chapter is the one who is weak in faith. They believe that their faith does not allow them to do certain things. The weakness has nothing to do with an emotional or physical susceptibility. It is a theological weakness.”

Principles about How to Disagree

5) Only do what leads to peace and mutual edification (14:16-21).

“So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.

Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats. It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble.”

Principles about How to Disagree

5) Only do what leads to peace and mutual edification (14:19-21).

- **What is good is bad if it leads to disharmony and does not build up the church.**
- **Disagreements about eating and drinking are not important in the kingdom of God.**
- **Building each other up in righteousness, peace and joy is the important thing!**

5) Only do what leads to peace and mutual edification (14:19-21).

➤ 14:19, “Let us therefore **follow** after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may **edify** another.”

- **Dioko** means “to seek after eagerly, earnestly endeavour to acquire”
- **Oikodomeo** means “to build up, to promote growth in Christian grace and virtue”

5) Only do what leads to peace and mutual edification (14:19-21).

- **When we follow after peace and seek to edify, the non-essentials will not matter so much.**



Soul-searching Question

- Are you a builder or a destroyer?



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Principles about How to Disagree

6) Never impose your personal convictions (14:22-23).

“The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves. But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.”

Principles about How to Disagree

6) Never impose your personal convictions (14:22-23).

- Don't police others to adopt your convictions.
- When you say that holding a particular view on a disputable matter is essential to be a Christian, you have crossed the line into legalism and heresy.

Sam Storms

Here's how Sam Storms defines legalism:

- **“Legalism is the tendency to regard as divine law things that God has neither required nor forbidden in Scripture, and the corresponding inclination to look with suspicion on others for their failure or refusal to conform. . . . Do you elevate to the status of moral law something the Bible does not require?”**

Principles about How to Disagree

7) We must follow the example of Christ who put others first (15:1-6).

“We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, “The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.” For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Principles about How to Disagree

7) We must follow the example of Christ who put others first (15:1-6).

- **Paul is not telling you to become a “people pleaser” (v.2) who cares more about what others think than about what God thinks.**
- **The choice is not between pleasing people and pleasing God, but between pleasing others and pleasing yourself.**

Principles about How to Disagree

7) We must follow the example of Christ who put others first (15:1-6).

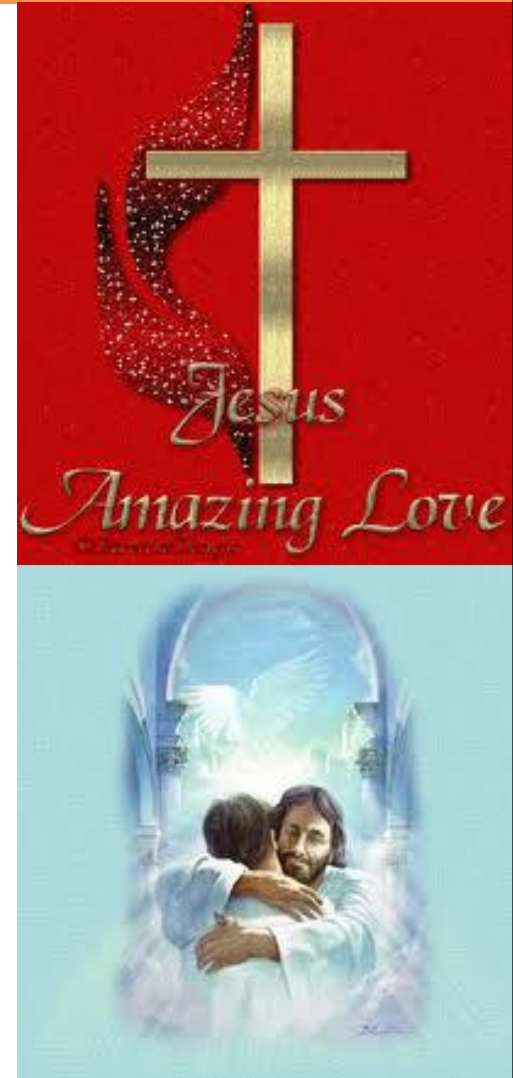
- **Verse 3 emphasizes the example of Christ.**
- **Compared to what Christ suffered on the cross, to give up a freedom like eating meat is a trifle indeed!**

Principles about How to Disagree

➤ Jesus Christ is our Ultimate Example

“As Christ also received us” (15:7)

- *Romans 5:8 says, “While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*
- It is Jesus’ nature to love the unlovable.



Principles about How to Disagree

8) We bring glory to God when we welcome one another as Christ has welcomed us (15:7).

“Therefore, welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.”

What's the point?

- **It matters how you treat those who disagree with you on disputable matters.**

Challenge

➤ Jesus Christ is our Ultimate Example

*“Wherefore **receive** (accept) ye one another”*



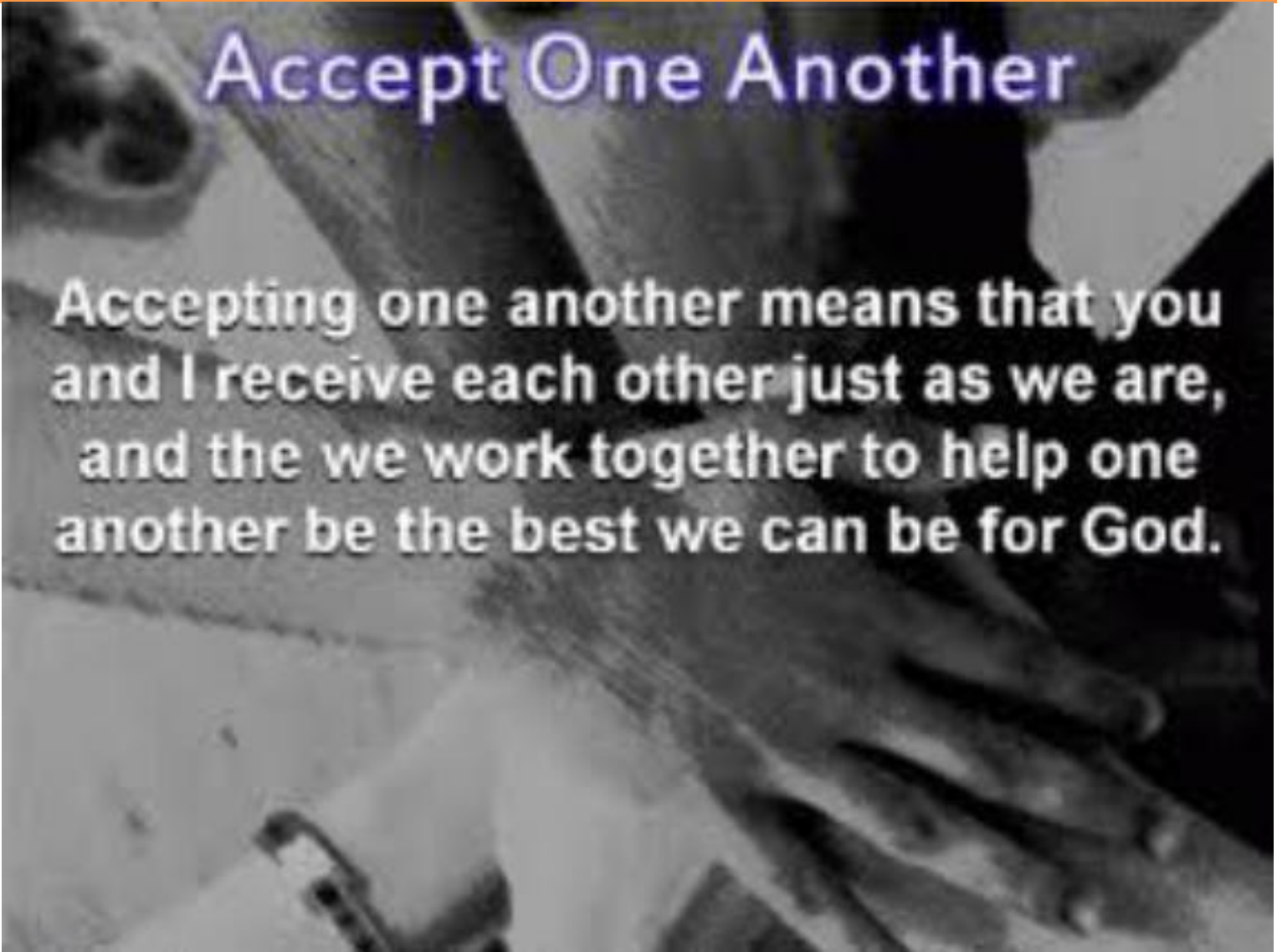
The Greek word (*proslambano*) means “to receive kindly or hospitably” or “to welcome.”



Challenge

Accept One Another

Accepting one another means that you and I receive each other just as we are, and then we work together to help one another be the best we can be for God.



Challenge

- **That God's glory may be promoted by our harmony and brotherly love (15:7).**

