

Better Disagreements = Better Relationships

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Take-Home Truth: In fundamental disagreements, love is the glue that keeps you connected.

Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. ¹⁰Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other . . . ¹⁴Bless those who persecute you. Don't curse them; pray that God will bless them. ¹⁵Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep. ¹⁶Live in harmony with each other. Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all! ¹⁷Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. ¹⁸Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone. ¹⁹Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, "I will take revenge; I will pay them back," says the LORD. ²⁰Instead, "If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads."²¹Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good.
Romans 12:9-10, 14-21 (New Living Translation)

Standard #1: Love people, even the ones you disagree with.

Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them . . . Romans 12:9a (NLT)

Agape love = the grace-filled, unconditional love that flows from the heart of God

Application Tip: Before, during and after a disagreement, gain an awareness of God's gracious love for you and extend that same love to the person to whom you're talking.

Standard #2: With other believers, love means working towards harmony.

Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other . . . ¹⁶Live in harmony with each other. Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all! Romans 12:10, 16 (NLT)

- "genuine affection" = *philadelphia* = brotherly love
- "live in harmony" = "having the same attitude toward each other" = wanting you to have what—if I were in your position—I would want for myself
- The idea: oneness of heart without conformity of conclusion

Application Tip: When disagreeing with another believer, be inviting God to help you interact humbly, in “the spirit of joint inquiry”.

Standard #3: With nonbelievers, love means doing my best to live peaceably.

*Bless those who persecute you; bless and don't curse them . . . ¹⁸If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹Beloved, never avenge yourselves . . . ²⁰To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. . . .”
²¹Don't be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Romans 12:14, 18-21 (English Standard Version)

- **bless** = a positive statement that invokes the blessing of God in the life of another (positive, affirming, loving, kind, gentle, respectful)
- **curse** = using language or demonstrating attitudes that project evil into someone's life (negative, critical, unkind, disrespectful)

Application Tip: Spend some time thinking about this question: What would it look like for me to become a “person of blessing” in (insert name of nonbeliever)'s life?

Love does no wrong to a neighbor . . . Romans 13:10a (ESV)