

‘Getting Along While You Belong’: Fighting Against Dissension in Your Church in the Age of Individualism, Preference and Hostility.

I. Getting Along - A challenging matter, even in New Testament times.

- a. Acts 6: Christians from the same ethnic group, but from different backgrounds.
- b. Acts 15:1-29: Christians from the same ethnic group and language, but with disagreements over doctrine.
- c. Acts 15:36-40: Christians from the same ethnic group, language, and doctrine, but with disagreements over ministry specifics.
- d. 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; 6:1-8; 11:18-22: Christians from different ethnic groups, language, and social status.
- e. Galatians 2:11-14: Two Christian men from the same ethnic group and language, but with disagreements over doctrine and ministry specifics.
- f. Philippians 4:2-3: Two Christian ladies from the same church, of unknown background.
- g. 3 John 9-11: Diotrephes, the prototype of the pseudo-Christian troublemaker.

II. Getting Along – A serious concern for the Lord, for which He gives us grace. *Note how these ideas are found in all the NT writers.*

- a. The words of Jesus (Gospels): Matthew 20:26; 22:37-40; Mark 9:33-35; John 17:21.
- b. The teaching in James: James 2:1-8, 15.
- c. The teaching of Paul: Romans 12; Romans 14-15:1-7; 1 Corinthians 13; Philippians 2:1-5; Colossians 3:12-15; 1 Thessalonians 3:12, 4:9-10, 5:12-15; Titus 3:2.
- d. The teaching by the writer of Hebrews: Hebrews 10:24-25, 13:1-3.
- e. The teaching of Peter: 1 Peter 1:22; 2:17, 3:8, 4:8-9, 5:5; 2 Peter 1:7

f. The teaching of the apostle John: 1 John 3:10-18, 4:7-12.

g. The teaching in Jude: Jude 1:21-23.

III. Getting Along – An increasing necessity as we face a fractured and increasingly unfriendly society.

IV. Getting Along – An inevitable future reality for genuine disciples of Jesus: 1 Thessalonians 4:17-18.

There are no “cubicles” in Heaven!

V. Practical Steps which reinforce unity and curb dissension:

- **Try to see things from other people’s perspectives.** The most important thing, of course, is to try to view things **from God’s perspective**. Also, try to understand where others are coming from. **You have the Spirit!**
- **Unless there is obvious proof, give the benefit of the doubt to the brother or sister in Christ.** Of course, we categorically refuse to turn a blind eye to what is clearly wrong.
- **Admit that divining the intentions and motives of the hearts is not your spiritual gift.**
- **We can disagree without being mean and ungracious.**
- **Make allowance for special mitigating factors:** unique situations that might partially explain a person’s behavior or words. Are they dealing with tremendous pain? Have they lost a loved one? Are they struggling mentally? Also make allowance for differences in age, in language, in gender, and in maturity in communication.
- **Family dynamics** can become a minefield when disagreement arise. Walk through them very carefully.
- **Be careful about overprotecting your ‘turf’ in a ministry.**
- **Pray throughout the process of disagreement - and attempt to make some move towards reconciliation - even a small one.**
- **Allow time to heal after dissension, and know that ultimately, there will be reconciliation, when believers are involved!**