



Difficult People

Text: Genesis 30:25-43

Bible Teacher Timothy Ateek

1. We are all difficult people in one way or another. Which of these points from the message do you most recognize in yourself? In which of your relationships might you be more difficult person?
 - a. Difficult people use people.
 - b. Difficult people are untrustworthy people.
 - c. Difficult people are controlling.
2. In the life of Laban, we see his need to control his son-in-law, Jacob, for his own personal gain. This practically plays out in attempting to take away the flock of speckled and spotted sheep and goats in order to limit Jacob's standing in society, leaving him to stay with Laban. In what relationships do you find yourself struggling for control?
3. You may know someone who has had to deal with difficult people, or you may have experienced dealing with them yourself. As we study the Bible, we find that God lets other people and experiences build character in us. Often, we just want the difficult person to go away and bother someone else. What should our motive be when dealing with anyone?
 - a. Hebrews 12:14
 - b. Romans 12:18
4. How has your goal with difficult people been different from T.A.'s stated goal that the life of a difficult person should be better because of us? Have you thought about what role God might be calling you to play in their life?
5. T.A. said that the mantra of our lives should be, "Imperfect, but faithful." He also said, "We are not naturally deserving of God's love; we are naturally deserving of His wrath." How does the lavishing of God's love upon us free us up to be imperfect, but faithful to the cause of Christ?

Challenge: T.A. challenged us to look at a relationship in our lives and ask the question: "Is my insert relationship better because I am in it?" Pick a relationship that is better because you are in it and describe why that is the case. Now think of a relationship that is worse off because you are inserted into it and what action steps you can take to improve it.

Prayer: Oh, Lord, when I am dealing with difficult people, help me to check my attitude to be sure I'm not contributing to the problem. Remind me to respond with love and respect, rather than criticism or anger. You promised that if our ways please You, even our enemies will be at peace with us. I want to please You, and I want to live in such a way that my life is a witness to others.

STUDY DEEPER

The Lord outlines basic life principles within what we call the Sermon on the Mount. Careful reading of Matthew 5-7 reveals keys to building better relationships. His words may seem difficult to practice. After all, He advocates turning the other cheek, going the second mile, loving our enemies, blessing those who curse us, and praying for those who spitefully use us and persecute us. Our natural inclination is to do the opposite in each of these situations, but He has called us to a higher standard.

Steps to Better Relationships

What steps should we take when dealing with a frustrating, vexing, or demanding person?

1. **Show humility.** We cannot respond as if we are superior or a better person. Philippians 2:3 instructs, “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.”
2. **Show respect.** We may feel they do not deserve it, but humility and respect work hand in hand. Matthew 7:12 tell us that we must treat others as we would like to be treated. Focus on their good points—and yes, each person has some.
3. **Keep quiet.** This means no complaining to others, dropping sarcastic comments about the person, or “telling all” on social media. Matthew 18:15 tells us to “go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone.”
4. **Keep calm.** Some people seem full of anger, and it spills over on those around them. It is easy to respond in a similar manner, but that only fuels the situation. Remember, “A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger” (Proverbs 15:1).
5. **Don’t retaliate.** Don’t try to “get even.” We are taking God’s role if we do. (Read Romans 12:17, 19.) Allow God to handle it in His time and in His way.
6. **Don’t gloat.** If misfortune overtakes that person, even if perhaps it is the result of their bad choices, don’t delight in their trouble. Proverbs 24:17 tells us, “Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles” (New King James Version).
7. **Walk away.** Sometimes the wisest course of action in a situation is to remove ourselves. When it is not possible to physically walk away, we can say as little as possible rather than provoke the situation. Even the Lord used this tactic (Mark 3:6-7).
8. **Live biblically.** When our relationship with God is healthy, our relationships with others will also be better. “When a man’s ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him” (Proverbs 16:7).

Life Reflection:

What should my attitude be when dealing with a difficult person?

Why do I find it difficult to respond as God's Word tells me I should?

Is it possible—just barely possible—that occasionally *we* are that difficult person to *someone else*? If we do a little soul-searching, we may just have to answer *yes!*

“And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?” (Matthew 7:3, NKJV).

When we are dealing with a difficult situation, it is important that we first examine our own actions, attitudes and motives.

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