

TLP 535: Biblical Conflict Resolution, Part 1 | prepare your worldview

I. Believe that Disagreement is Not Inherently Bad.

- **Disagreeing with God is always a sin.**
 - Psalm 119:160; *“The sum of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting.”*
 - John 17:17, *“Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.”*
 - Matthew 18:15-17, *“If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. 16 But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed.”*
 - I Corinthians 11:17-22, *“But in giving this instruction, I do not praise you, because you come together not for the better but for the worse. 18 For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part I believe it. 19 **For there must also be factions among you, so that those who are approved may become evident among you.** 20 Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord’s Supper, 21 for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk. 22 What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you.”*
 - It’s a sin to disagree with God, but it’s not a sin to disagree with the person who’s disagreeing with God.
- **Disagreeing in areas of liberty is not a sin.**
 - Romans 14:1-23 is a lengthy treatise on the types of food that Christians were choosing to eat or avoid. Verses 2-4 read, *“One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only. 3 The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him. 4 Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.”* The passage goes on to address the different observances among God’s people.
 - This principle is illustrated for us in Acts 15:36-41, *“After some days Paul said to Barnabas, ‘Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are.’ 37 Barnabas wanted to take John, called Mark, along with them also. 38 But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. 39 And there occurred such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. 40 But Paul chose Silas and left, being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord. 41 And he was traveling through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.”* Which of them was right?
 - We can disagree on any points in a Christ-honoring way that absolutely will not involve conflict. It won’t cause strife. There will be no sin.
 - Now, that doesn’t mean we couldn’t choose to sin in our disagreement. We might sadly embrace pride, unkindness, impatience, cutting words, and hatefulness in our disagreement, but it’s not required simply because we disagree.
 - And this is right where our society exists, and so many Christians exist in the same cultural misunderstanding. Our American culture believes that to disagree with a person is to hate him or her. People don’t understand how those who have strong disagreements can be friends. The very presence of disagreement is an invitation for raised voices and unkindness.

- **Sinfully disagreeing on *any* topic is a sin.**
 - I Corinthians 13:1, *“If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.”* God is not glorified if we’re being unloving. Even if our words are biblical, sinful hatred (which is the antithesis of biblical love) makes our speaking those words a sin.
 - James 4:1-4, *“What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? 2 You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. 4 You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God?”*
 - Sinful fighting is always the result of spiritual adultery, otherwise known as idolatry.
 - Therefore, in order to avoid conflict and resolve it when it arises, we must recognize that disagreement is not inherently sinful.
 - Yes, it’s a sin to disagree with God, but we have great liberty in how we live our lives, and that disagreement only ever becomes sinful when we choose to inject some other sin into the disagreement.

II. When Parents and Children Disagree

- **Are they disagreeing with us about something that is clearly biblical?**
 - If we are being ambassadors of God and holding our children to the expectations God communicates in the Bible, then they are ultimately not disagreeing with us so much as they are disagreeing with God. So, yes, that disagreement is obviously a sin. But I hope you can recognize that the element that makes this disagreement a sin has nothing to do with the fact that they’re disagreeing with *you*.
 - But what if it’s not a clear biblical command? Is it a sin for our kids to disagree with our views on curfews, the value of certain foods, clothing styles, music, etc?
- **Are they disagreeing with us about legitimate areas of Christian liberty?**
 - As long as we’re not disagreeing with God, **basic disagreement is okay.**
 - **Disagreement doesn’t permit disobedience.**
 - It doesn’t matter what curfew, music, dress, food, or entertainment preferences your family has, if you tell them they are not allowed to stay out past a certain time, listen to a certain kind of music, dress a certain way, eat certain kinds of food, or engage in certain forms of entertainment, then they would be disobeying if they did. That—in and of itself—is a sin.
 - But is it still wrong for them to disagree even if they’re following the rules? No, not inherently. It’s actually a sign of maturity to be able to disagree without sinning, and you should want your children to become mature.
 - You can’t force your child to agree with you. You might scare them or strong arm them into pretending to agree with you.
 - Teach your child to be mature. But don’t make the disagreement the main thing.
 - When you engage in war over the sheer presence of the disagreement, you’re attacking the wrong thing and thereby putting the focus where it doesn’t belong. It’s not about your preference versus their’s. It’s about obeying God (which includes obeying you) and growing in their spiritual maturity.