

How to Love One Another in Today's Politically Charged Environment—Respectfully Disagree with Someone

Objective:

How do I respectfully disagree with someone when I know the discussion is likely to be contentious? Unfortunately, there is no way to be prepared for all possible or even likely contentious situations. Becoming an experienced apologist is a long and arduous road. Where do I start intellectually, spiritually, emotionally? This topic endeavors to give guidance to these questions.

A good place to start is what did Jesus mean by love your neighbor as yourself? There are three kinds of love.

1. eros-erotic love or desire
2. philia-friendly feeling toward
3. agape-the fatherly love of God for humans, as well as the human reciprocal love for God.

Jesus had agape love in mind. Jesus refers to this in the bible reading Mt. 10:34-37 below. We should strive to focus on *agape love* when we are confronted with situations where the issue at hand is likely to be truth at odds with a feeling or desire. When our love (agape) for others is foremost in our mind and heart we are more likely to influence others, but not to win the argument but their heart. So how does this work. See the vignette below.

Song Suggestion: Prayer of St. Francis (Blue 368, Red 721)

Bible and Catechism Readings: –

Mt 22:36-39

When asked what was the greatest commandment, Jesus answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, you shall love (agape) your neighbor as yourself”

Mt 10:34-37

Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's foes will be those of his own household. He who loves (philia) father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves (philia) son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

Catechism - Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church

42. In what way does God reveal that he is love? 218-221

God revealed himself to Israel as the One who has a stronger love than that of parents for their children or of husbands and wives for their spouses. God in himself “is love” (1 John 4: 8.16), who gives himself completely and gratuitously, who “so loved the world that he gave his only Son so that the world might be saved through him” (John 3:16-17). By sending his Son and the Holy Spirit, God reveals that he himself is an eternal exchange of love.

Saint:

St. Francis of Assisi- A prayer from St. Francis of Assisi: "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace; where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy.

Vignette: – Steve Ray, Catholic Answers apologist and a Catholic convert, has six rules for dealing with non-Catholic family and friends.

#1. Don't argue.

#2. Love them more than ever.

I remember the time a woman came up to me with a red face and angry words rushing from her mouth when she was still five feet away. She railed against the Catholic Church and my teaching. After a few moments, I stepped forward and gave her a big hug and whispered in her ear, "I love you too, and thanks for caring about my soul."

#3. Pray and make sacrifices

This seems like common sense, but we often spend our time fuming and creating imaginary arguments in our heads when we should direct our energy and time to serious prayer. Make a prayer list and be persistent in prayer.

#4. Study the Catholic faith

#5. Show the Lord's joy in your life.

#6. Ask God to bring someone else to influence him for the Faith, since he won't listen to you.

We prayed for family members who had completely shunned us because of our conversion. I decided to pray every day, like the woman and the unjust judge. A year later a person unknown to me said to my relative, "I just read the best book I've ever read. You must read it." My relative said, "Tell me the title and I'll order a copy." The friend said, "It's *Crossing the Tiber* by Steve Ray."

My relative almost fell on the floor. "What? He's my relative! You liked his book?" From that point on all animosity was gone. No more arguments, silent treatments, or shunning. My relative did not convert, but relations were restored, and we consider that a huge step forward.

Rule No. 6 means we must be willing to step back and take a hands-off approach. Pray for God to move the pieces around on his cosmic chess board until he can bring the right pieces together—to bring the right person to influence your loved one.

Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion:

Share an experience about a contentious political or other discussion.

What do you think Jesus meant in the reading from Matthew above?

What are some synonyms for showing love in a contentious discussion?

How does St. Francis' prayer give guidance in your state of mind when you are faced with a discussion where your *philia* love is at odds with *agape* love?

Resources:

"The *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which I now present to the Universal Church, is a faithful and sure synthesis of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. It contains, in concise form, all the essential and fundamental elements of the Church's faith, thus constituting, as my Predecessor had wished, a kind of *vademecum* (a handbook or guide that is kept constantly at hand for consultation) which allows believers and non-believers alike to behold the entire panorama of the Catholic faith.

In its structure, contents and language, the *Compendium* faithfully reflects the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and will thus assist in making the *Catechism* more widely known and more deeply understood." **BENEDICTUS Pope Pius XVI** 28 June 2005

Charity in Truth (*Caritas in Veritate*) Pope Benedict XVI

Catholic Answers (catholic.com)

Five Non-Religious Arguments Against Abortion

Action Plan:

Spend some time to build yourself --spiritually through prayer, intellectually through study and emotionally through practicing control to mind what you learned in the first two.

If this discussion opened your eyes to a different perspective think about how you can try to address or respond to a family related matter with which you have struggled.

Author: Nick Carpinello