

I Disagree with You, but I Love You.

Rise & Shine, July 21st

Romans 12:10-20

Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

Questions:

1. Do you think you are angrier today than you used to be? If so, why? In "angry times," do Christians have a greater responsibility to outdo others in showing honor?
2. How would it change your life if you started all your disagreements with the statement, "I disagree with you, but I love you?"
3. Is expressing your anger towards those you vehemently disagree with your *right*? How do you express your anger? What does anger look like on you? In what ways, if at all, have you adjusted how you express your anger as you've matured in your faith?
4. What is your perception of how your anger affects your well-being? What is your perception of how someone else's anger aimed at you affects your well-being?

In the News

Americans Are Angrier Than a Generation Ago, Poll Says

According to a recent NPR-IBM Watson Health poll of 3,004 people, reported last week on NPR, about 84 percent of Americans say they are angrier today than they were a generation ago.

Asked about their feelings over the past year, 42 percent of respondents said they were angrier more often than they had been in the past.

Regarding reading the news, 29 percent reported getting angry often, while 42 percent said they get angry sometimes while doing so. Age seems to make a difference, however, with those over 65 saying they were somewhat less likely to be angered by the news. Only 21 percent of seniors said they were likely to be angered by the news, compared with 38 percent of people younger than 35.

Social media is another anger trigger for some respondents, with 31 percent saying checking such media gets them angry sometimes and 12 percent saying they get angry often while checking social media. The percentage of respondents who are angered by social media decreases with increasing age. Only 7 percent of people 65 and over said they were often angry when using social media, compared with 18 percent of people under 35. Seniors, in general, are much less likely to use social media.

A whopping 91 percent of respondents said that they feel people are more likely to express their anger on social media than they are in person.

About 69 percent of respondents said anger is a negative emotion, but 31 percent said that isn't always the case. NPR research beyond the poll suggests that getting mad can be motivating and help lead someone to positive action.

Commenting on the increased rates of anger, Dr. Anil Jain, vice president and chief health information officer at IBM Watson Health, said, "I think of anger as a health risk. The fact that the survey showed that we have a generation of Americans who believe that they are more angry than they were a generation ago tells me that this is going to lead to some consequences from a health point of view."

Not only are harboring grudges, staying angry, and holding onto unforgiveness linked to psychological consequences, but they can also take a physiological toll. One study from Concordia University found that anger was even more dangerous than sadness. People who were angry had more low-grade inflammation and were more likely to suffer from a chronic illness than people who described themselves as sad. Other studies show that anger clouds your ability to see things from someone else's perspective.

"There's no question we are in angry times," said Scott Hensley, reporting for NPR on the poll. "It's in our politics, our schools and our homes. Anger can be a destructive emotion, but it can also be a positive force."

Here are some Bible verses and a question outline to guide our discussion:

Ephesians 4:26-27

Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not make room for the devil. (For context, read 4:25-32.)

1 Peter 4:8-10

Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining. Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.

Luke 6:27-31

But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you.

Prayer in Times of Conflict (BCP p.824)

O God, you have bound us together in a common life. Help us, in the midst of our struggles for justice and truth, to confront one another without hatred or bitterness, and to work together with mutual forbearance and respect; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.