

## Dealing With Difficult People

- I. Difficult people are referred to as *froward* in the Bible.
  1. Froward *adj.* - 1. Disposed to go counter to what is demanded or what is reasonable; perverse, difficult to deal with, hard to please; refractory, ungovernable; also, in a wider sense, bad, evilly-disposed, 'naughty'. (The opposite of *toward*.)
  2. People that are difficult to deal with are evil (**Pro 2:12, 14-15; Pro 6:12**).
  3. God hates froward people (**Pro 3:32; Pro 8:13; Pro 11:20**).
    - A. Abomination *n.* - 1. The feeling or state of mind of combined disgust and hatred; abhorrence, detestation, loathing.
    - B. Therefore, God hates people who are difficult to deal with.
- II. If possible, avoid difficult people.
  1. Contentious people will cause strife (**Pro 16:28; Pro 26:21; Pro 15:18**).
  2. Make no friendship with an angry man (**Pro 22:24-25**).
  3. A companion of fools shall be destroyed (**Pro 13:20**).
  4. Evil communication corrupts good manners (**1Co 15:33**).
  5. Go from the presence of a foolish man (**Pro 14:7**).
  6. You will end up being ashamed if you run with riotous men (**Pro 28:7**).
  7. Hanging out with sinners will vex your soul (**2Pe 2:7-8**).
    - A. Vex *v.* - I. 1. *trans.* To trouble, afflict, or harass (a person, etc.) by aggression, encroachment, or other interference with peace and quiet.
    - B. If you want to live a good and peaceful life, forsake the foolish (**Pro 9:6**).
- III. Sometimes, though, it's impossible to avoid difficult people altogether.
  1. Such cases may include family relationships.
    - A. Where religion is concerned, a man's foes are often in his own family (**Mat 10:34-37**).
    - B. This is especially true of people who have been converted and have forsaken their family's religion.
  2. Difficult bosses or coworkers will also sometimes fall into this category (**1Pe 2:18**).
  3. Sadly, sometimes even church members can be difficult to deal with.
  4. In such cases, try to implement the following Biblical principles into the relationship.
- IV. You must control the relationship.
  1. You must set boundaries for difficult people.
    - A. This could be distancing yourself from them socially or even physically.
      - i. Abraham and Lot parted ways when there was strife between their people (**Gen 13:5-12**).
      - ii. Paul and Barnabas separated from each other when they had sharp contention between them (**Act 15:36-41**).
    - B. This could be setting limits on how often you communicate with them (talk, text, message, etc.).
    - C. This could be setting limits on what topics you discuss with them.
      - i. Tell them that you will not discuss negative topics.

- ii. Tell them that you will not entertain requests that you have already denied them.
  - D. Tell them if they break your rules or cross your boundaries, the conversation will end.
  - 2. You must train them by enforcing your rules consistently.
    - A. When they see that you are steadfastly minded, they will stop trying to change your mind (**Rut 1:18; Act 21:14**).
    - B. But if you don't enforce your rules, you will allow them to control the relationship.
    - C. You must follow through with whatever consequences you tell them they will face if they break the rules or cross the boundaries.
  - 3. Don't let them make you feel guilty by their manipulation.
- V. You must be prepared to walk away from the relationship when possible.
- 1. If a difficult person will not respect your rules and boundaries, you need to avoid him, if possible (**Psa 101:4**).
  - 2. This is very important to do in a case where you are dating a difficult person.
    - A. Bad character traits will only get worse after marriage.
    - B. It is utter folly to assume that a person's character will improve after marriage.
    - C. If the person you are dating is disagreeable and contentious, get out of the relationship now before it's too late.
    - D. It's better to be alone (**Pro 21:9; Pro 21:19; Pro 27:15**).
- VI. Don't argue with fools.
- 1. Speak not into the ears of a fool (**Pro 23:9; Job 32:1**).
  - 2. Whether you rage or laugh, there will be no rest (**Pro 29:9**).
  - 3. Some wicked people are just implacable (**Rom 1:31**).
  - 4. Implacable *adj.* - 1. That cannot be appeased; irreconcilable; inexorable: of persons, feelings, etc.
  - 5. They can't even be spoken to (**1Sa 25:17**).
- VII. Don't bend over backwards for them.
- 1. Some people will be offended no matter what you say or do (**Mat 11:16-17**).
    - A. They will condemn you if you *don't* eat or drink something (**Mat 11:18**).
    - B. They will condemn you if you *do* eat or drink something (**Mat 11:19**).
  - 2. When you meet a person who cannot be pleased, don't try to please them.
    - A. They will never be satisfied with any concessions you make.
    - B. They will always push for more (**Pro 27:20**).
    - C. Let them alone (**Mat 15:12-14**).
- VIII. When you must interact with difficult people, do the following.
- 1. Use a soft answer (**Pro 15:1**).
  - 2. Control your temper at all times.
    - A. Be slow to speak and slow to wrath (**Pro 14:29; Jam 1:19-20**).
    - B. If you don't have rule over your spirit, you will harm yourself (**Pro 25:28**).
    - C. If you have control over your temper, you can deal with anyone (**Pro 16:32**).
  - 3. Try to steer the conversation in a non-confrontational direction.

- A. Avoid talking about subjects that are going to set them off.
  - B. Don't respond to comments they make that are designed to cause a fight.
- 4. Don't talk back to them the way they talk to you (sometimes) **(Pro 26:4)**.
  - A. This will make you no better than them.
  - B. This will only agitate the situation.
  - C. "Never argue with a fool, onlookers may not be able to tell the difference." (Mark Twain)
- 5. Talk back to them the way that they talk to you (sometimes) **(Pro 26:5)**.
  - A. This is necessary sometimes to make them see how stupid they are acting.
  - B. Always make sure when doing this that you are doing so to ultimately help the person and not just to get revenge.
  - C. God acts *froward* (*difficult to deal with*) toward those who are *froward* **(Psa 18:26)**, and we sometimes need to do the same.

IX. When possible, try to live peaceably with all men **(Rom 12:18; Heb 12:14)**.

- 1. Pray for them **(Mat 5:44)**.
- 2. They obviously have spiritual and emotional problems that are manifesting in their contentiousness.
- 3. Remember to have mercy **(Jam 2:13)**.
- 4. Try to understand them and uncover the root cause of their contentious attitude.
- 5. If you do this, you just might be able to help them to heal.