

# **“Difficult Women”**

**(Phil. 4:1-3)**

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## **I. Introduction**

### **A. What a day for the church in Philippi**

1. Will read a letter from Apostle Paul to congregation
2. An elder stands up and begins to read it
3. All is going well until he gets to this section (Phil. 4:1-3)
  - a. Calls out two leading women of the church
  - b. By name!
  - c. Names their sin
4. Accused of causing disharmony
  - a. Church told to correct them – or else
5. Could have heard a pin drop

### **B. Disharmony in churches**

1. Main reason many people leave churches
  - a. Go for peace and discover discord
  - b. People gossiping about each other
2. Reason many workers “burn out”
  - a. People hate conflict
3. Will work tirelessly if there is harmony

- a. Conflict from the outside is okay....and expected
- 4. The Chapel Pointe blessing
- 5. Harmony requires constant vigilance
  - a. Satan hates to see the brothers & sisters getting along
- 6. Will sometimes require some difficult intervention

### **C. People can be life's greatest joy...and greatest heartache**

#### 1. Examples

- |                                   |                          |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. Loving husband                 | Verbally abusive husband |
| b. Considerate best friend        | Thoughtless best friend  |
| c. Appreciative child             | Rebellious child         |
| d. Fair-minded employer           | An unrealistic boss      |
| e. Wife with a stable temperament | Moody wife               |
| f. Helpful neighbor               | Nosy Neighbor            |
| g. Warm loving church             | Divided hostile church   |

#### 2. Wouldn't it be nice if everybody was perfect?

- a. But it'll never happen
  - 1. Short of Heaven
- b. You may be one of the chief problems!

### **B. How to get along with difficult people**

- 1. May save you some sleepless nights

## **II. Text...Phil. 4:1-3**

### **A. When people are life's greatest joy (v.1)**

*(1) Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!*

1. A pastor's love for his people....v.1
2. Terms of endearment
  - a. *"my brothers (includes the sisters)"*
  - b. *"you whom I love"*
  - c. *"you whom I long for,"*
  - b. *"my joy"*
  - e. *"my crown (or reward)"*
3. Our emphasis on "small groups"
  - a. Where you can develop depth in relationships
  - b. Somebody to call in times of crisis
  - c. People you long to be with
4. Pastors need to have this level of love for their people
5. Paul encourages them to keep up the good work
  - a. *"stand firm in the Lord".....v.1*
  - b. Keep on serving
  - c. Don't become...
    1. Discouraged
    2. Disenchanted
6. He also tell them to fix a dangerous situation

## **B. When people are life's greatest heartache (v.2)**

*(2) I plead with Euodia (U-o'-dia) and I plead with Syntyche (Sin'-te-kee) to agree with each other in the Lord. (3) Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.*

1. Special church for Paul
  - a. Started with the women at the river
  - b. The earthquake while in jail
  - c. The conversion of the jailer, etc.
2. Paul had received word of conflict....v.2
  - a. While a prisoner in Rome
  - b. Involved two women
    1. U-o'-dia (Euodia) and Sin'-te-kee (Syntyche)
3. We don't know the specific issue
  - a. But it doesn't appear to have been doctrinal
  - b. Seldom is
    1. Most church disunity involves hurt feelings

## **C. What we do know**

### ***1. Two women were involved in the conflict***

- a. The special role of women in the founding of the church
  1. The women at the river
  2. Euodia and Syntyche may have been there
- b. Role of women in Chapel Pointe
  1. We couldn't operate without them

### ***2. They were both hard workers***

- a. They ***“contended at Paul's side for the cause of the gospel”***
- b. The early days must have been tough
  1. Stood shoulder-to-shoulder with Paul

- c. Harmony when under attack from the outside
- d. The danger when the daily grind takes over
  - 1. May have become disenchanted
  - 2. Attacked others
  - 3. Sowed disharmony
- e. They were good people
- f. None of us is too good to be lured into contention

***3. They were with Paul from the start.....v.3***

***(3) Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.***

- a. May have been down at the river
  - 1. May have helped start the church
- b. Problems with the “owners of the church”
  - 1. “I was here before you!”
- c. This is God’s church...not mine or yours
- d. Length of membership doesn’t necessarily mean seniority of influence

***4. It was time for somebody to intervene***

- a. Reports had reached Paul
- b. The church must “help them”
  - 1. Sit them down
- c. Asked somebody referred to as “loyal yokefellow”
  - 1. Don’t know who it was

***5. Disharmony won’t just go away by itself***

- a. It is more likely to suck others into the melee
  - 1. Poisoning the well
- b. Like a bad tooth...it'll only get worse if not fixed
- c. You need to confront your issues
  - 1. "The facts are your friends"

**6. *Disharmony was a constant challenge to Paul***

- a. Paul with Mark
  - 1. Second missionary journey
  - 2. Personality problem
  - 3. Barnabas took him
- b. Conflict with Peter
  - 1. Gal. 2:11-14
  - 2. Theological problem
  - 3. Working with Peter!
  - 4. Peter was a difficult person
- c. Paul had learned how to deal with difficult people
  - 1. Life is filled with them
  - 2. Some of the very best

**D. Learning to deal with difficult people**

- 1. Anyone can deal with the sweethearts
  - a. You know the type
  - b. Never hear a criticism
- 2. But there are others...

### 3. Importance for you

- a. You live and work in a world of difficult people
- c. Your home has difficult people
- d. They can impact your—
  - 1. Attitude
  - 2. Emotional health
  - 3. Spiritual health
  - 4. Physical health
  - 5. Productivity
  - 6. Mental health
  - 7. Joy in living
- e. Unresolved disharmony gnaws at the heart

## **E. How to achieve harmony in your life**

### *1. Confront disharmony when it appears*

*(1) Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends! (2) I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord. (3) Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.*

- a. Paul “pleads” with them
  - 1. He made it his problem
  - 2. Can you imagine when this letter was read to the whole church?
- b. Offer to help them reconcile
  - 1. It may be all it takes
- d. When one part of the body suffers—

1. A broken toe

**2. *Make sure that everybody gets their facts straight***

**(2) *I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord.***

a. “to agree with each other”

1. “be of the same mind”

b. Source of most conflict involves not getting the story right

c. Examples...

d. The power of the Matthew 18 principle

1. First go to them alone

2. Get the facts straight

e. Misunderstanding

**3. *Strive to think like Jesus***

**(2) *I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord.***

a. “*agree with each other in the Lord*”

1. Accept Bible as the authority

2. Seek the mind of Christ

3. How would Christ handle it?

4. What would Christ think about it?

d. Two people controlled by one mind!

e. An entire congregation controlled by one mind—Jesus’

1. love toward the “unlovable”

2. patience

3. forgiveness of others

- 4. speak no malice
- f. Marriage to an unbeliever
  - 1. Two different minds
  - 2. Minds at war
  - 3. Totally different goals in life

#### ***4. Understand the value of working side-by-side***

***(3) Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.***

- a. They had “contended at each others sides”
  - 1. In the early days of the church
  - 2. They fought together
- b. The harmony of shared struggle
  - 1. Desert Storm vets
  - 2. WW II
- c. In your family
  - 1. Too busy
  - 2. Everyone doing their own thing
  - 3. Husband and wife living in different worlds
- e. How to pull the family back together
  - 1. Shared mind
  - 2. Work together
- f. Kids who don’t know what dad does
- g. On the job

1. Tug-of-war
2. Pulling different directions

h. Caused by selfishness

### **5. Choose your heroes wisely**

***(3) Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.***

a. The play on words

1. “yokefellow”

a. Greek—Syzygus

b. Can be a man’s name or a description

2. One who helped to pull the load

b. Gives a second example...Clement

1. Only place mentioned

a. Known by the two ladies

b. Well known in the church

c. Probable characteristics of Clement

1. Spiritual

2. Gave others the benefit of the doubt

3. Sought to restore not punish the sinner

4. Had a firm yet gentle manner

5. Realized that but by the grace of God it could be him

6. Corrected others with fear and trembling

### **6. Become a Galatians 6:1 person**

***(Gal. 6:1) “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.”***

***a. Examine your own life first***

***(Gal. 6:1) “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.”***

1. First check your own life
2. “you who are spiritual”
3. Get the beam out of your eye first

***b. Seek to “restore” not to “punish”***

***(Gal. 6:1) “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.”***

1. Forgive and seek restoration
2. Never give up

***c. Confront with a spirit of gentleness***

- a. It should be done “gently”
- b. (Eph. 4:15) “*Instead, speaking the truth in love,...*”
  1. Not just “nosy”
- c. If you can’t do it with love...
- d. People will respond to love

***d. Beware of the dangers of spiritual confrontation***

***(Gal. 6:1) “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.”***

1. “*or you also may be tempted*”
2. Pride that you’re better than them
3. Falling into the same sin

4. Requirements for an elder

(I Timothy 3:6)

“He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil.”

5. Think yourself better than the other person