

## I Entreat Husbands and Wives to Agree in the Lord

In **Philippians 4:2-9**, Paul encouraged two sisters in the church of Philippi to come together in agreement. Clearly, they were having some dissension and struggle. Paul wanted them to come to unity. Some even suggest that this entire section is Paul's advice to these women on how to come to that agreement. If so, what better place for husbands and wives who are struggling to turn to in order to learn how to overcome the struggles that often come up in marriage. Notice the advice Paul gives.

*#1: Find spiritual helpers:* Paul enlisted some person to come alongside these women and help. The ESV says, "true companion," with a footnote that this might be "loyal Syzygus." Some suggest that the word translated "companion" or "yokefellow" might actually be someone's name. Either way, Paul was calling on someone to help, and he believed that person knew who he was. Married couples need to find others to help and advise them. Be aware that all marriages have struggles. Find older, wiser married people whose marriages you respect to help you navigate the troublesome waters you face.

*#2: Rejoice in the Lord:* Look for where you can rejoice. Whatever is going on between you and your spouse, look for reason to rejoice. One good reason to rejoice is that God found you a spouse. Someone decided to marry you. What else can you find to rejoice in? Remember the salvation He has offered you and the good news that you can be saved even after your part in the struggles.

*#3: Let your reasonableness be known to everyone:* Some translations say "gentleness" here. Whatever you are feeling, make sure you respond with reasonableness and gentleness. This refers to being equitable, fair, and mild. Too many face disagreements and trouble by becoming extreme in their accusations, their statements, their reactions. Don't take that route; take the reasonable route.

*#4: Let your requests be made known to God with thanksgiving:* Clearly, you want to cast your cares on God. You may not know how the problem will be resolved, but God can do it. What really has you worried? What is the real problem bothering you? Bring that to God in prayer. But here is the hard part of this. Do it with thanksgiving. Rather than spending all your time thinking about the anxieties, bring thanksgivings to God even in the midst of your struggles. What can you still be thankful for in life and even in your marriage? Bring that to God as well.

*#5: Think better thoughts about your spouse:* All too often, when marriage strife begins, we villainize our spouse. We attribute the worst motives to them. We tell ourselves stories about how awful they are and how victimized we are. We focus on what bothers us to the exclusion of everything else. Paul says we need to think about what is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, and worthy of praise. Take some time to list what is great about your spouse. Think on those things. When the negative pops into your head, remove it and then focus on the positive things.

No doubt, there are many times you have to talk to your spouse about the negative things and work through them, but if you follow these steps, you will have a much better attitude toward your spouse, your marriage, and even the problem at hand. Then you will be able to deal with it in a God-glorifying way.

Paul wraps up by exhorting his readers to follow his example. This is exactly how he lived even in the face of troubles. He relied on godly helpers (**Philippians 2:22**). He found reason to rejoice even in the face of difficulties (**Philippians 1:18**). His gentleness and reasonableness is seen throughout this entire letter, as he reacts to bothersome teachers, imprisonments, and even this trouble between Euodia and Syntyche. He began this letter with a prayer of thanksgiving (**Philippians 1:3-11**). When he thought of Euodia and Syntyche, notice that he doesn't highlight all the bad things they had done, but highlights the true and noble point that they were fellow laborers in the gospel (**Philippians 4:3**). In other words, if we are going to act like Paul when we face troubles, we'll act just like he says in **Philippians 4:2-9**. He isn't just blowing smoke. This is how he lived his life. We need to face our troubles in this same way, especially in our marriages.

I entreat you husbands and wives to agree in the Lord. Trust me; you'll be glad you did.

--Edwin L. Crozier