

Words of Truth



Put Up With Small Annoyances To Gain Great Results

By: Brian A. Yeager

A new Chinese restaurant opened near our house here in El Paso. We wanted to try it and see if the prices, food quality, etc. were good. Like many Chinese restaurants, this one included “fortune cookies” with the meal. To be clear, I do not hold any view at all that one’s fortune is somehow included in these cookies. Anyone who would hold to such a “fortune teller” doctrine is holding to something that is false (Deuteronomy 18:9-14). Our family tends to find humor in what we find written on the little note inside these cookies. One cookie had the title of this article on it, “Put up with small annoyances to gain great results.” Thus, the subject of this article was born. Again, it is not that the cookie is right! I find things in many media formats that serve as springboards to spiritual thoughts.

Before we get into some great Biblical lessons along this subject matter, we need to realize what we are NOT going to find taught in this article. The word of God teaches that Christians can differ in conclusions when it comes to AUTHORIZED LIBERTIES (Romans 14:1-15:11). An authorized liberty is something that God says we may do, but does not say we must do. For example, one Christian may eat certain foods while another Christian may choose not to eat those foods. To say that it is sinful to eat something, which is authorized by God (Acts 10:9-15), is to teach a doctrine of demons (I Timothy 4:1-5). Another example is that we are supposed to be hospitable to each other (Romans 12:13 and I Peter 4:9). Whether one invites their fellow Christian to his or her home or uses another setting (i.e. restaurant, hotel room, etc.) is a matter of authorized liberties (Mark 8:4-9, Luke 10:33-34, and Acts 16:34). In all AUTHORIZED liberties, we should not be seeking carnality (Galatians 5:13), but acting within the boundaries of godliness (I Timothy 6:11).

On the other hand, some people teach a doctrine of unity in diversity wherein they compromise on those things that are not authorized liberties. If God has not approved of something we must not teach it or practice it (Matthew 28:18-20, Colossians 3:17, and Ephesians 5:10). Some people differ in whether matters of hospitality are a work of the local congregation as a whole. The word of God clearly shows that the church is not to be involved, collectively, in such affairs (Romans 14:17). We can’t differ where God has spoken (Philippians 3:16) or has been silent (Proverbs 30:5-6). When we are discussing putting up with small annoyances, we are not saying it is okay to put up with sin or false doctrine (Proverbs 23:23, II Thessalonians 3:6, I Timothy 6:3-5, and II John 9-11). Having made those things clear, let’s discuss how we can get past some annoying things for the greater cause of Jesus Christ.

We Can Be Annoyed And Still Accomplish Much Good With The Brethren!

Most people have something they say or do that seems “weird” to other people. I know I have a lot of quirks that could annoy someone else and I am readily aware of that. Sometimes my quirks are highly agitated when around brethren whose quirks are the polar opposite of my quirks. Brethren, when a

brother or sister in Christ is really aggravating me, based upon something that does not matter to God at all, I need to realize that these things must be overcome (I Corinthians 9:19-27). What I often find is that the problem is normally more my problem than my brother or sister in Christ. It's my quirk after all. There should be no schism in the body, as we should have the same care one for another (I Corinthians 12:25). Sometimes it is the Christian that I know to be weak that I need to treat more honorably for their sake (I Corinthians 12:22-23). We all have to be mindful not to do anything, within the framework of authorized liberties, which might cause our brethren to stumble (I Corinthians 8:12-13).

Now, notice this Scripture: *“Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved”* (I Corinthians 10:33). With this passage in mind, what should you do if you find your brother or sister irritates you when cheering on their favorite sports team, which happens to be the rival of your favorite team? What should you do if you find your brother or sister is irritating you by not washing their hands before they eat (cf. Matthew 15:20)? What should you do if you find your brother or sister is irritating you by telling the same stories over and over again? No doubt, you can fill in the blanks here with many things that may be irritating to you. Yet, if those things do not matter at all to God, should they matter to you so much? Of course not! All the things of this world will perish one day (II Peter 3:10). It is our brethren whom we shall spend all eternity with (I Thessalonians 4:16-17). Now, there are also points to be made about people of the world that do annoying things.

We Can Be Annoyed And Still Accomplish Much Good With Those We're Trying To Teach!

We know that those of the world, whom we are not teaching, should not be the people we share our valuable time with (James 4:4). There are those who we are teaching at times who may have some annoying things they do. How should we react? There was once an alien sinner who I studied with that was very inconsiderate of my time. Sadly, I can say the same of some brethren too. Yet, when we weigh what is really important, we should not be rash with people we can help to be in Heaven with us. If anyone is quirky, yet is sincerely interested in learning and obeying the truth (cf. Matthew 7:6; 10:14), here is what applies: *“And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will... Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine”* (II Timothy 2:24-26; 4:2).

Conclusion

If someone really annoys me, but wants to please the Lord, should I make sure they are going to be lost by not working with them to help save his or her soul (cf. I Timothy 2:4)? If someone is just annoying me with quirkiness, is that worth having a confrontation that may result in unnecessarily offending that person (cf. I Corinthians 8:9)? We all have different personalities. We all have things we like, dislike, tolerate, and cannot stand. Yet, if we take on the mindset of a servant, we'll find we care more about the likes of others than the dislikes of ourselves (II Corinthians 12:19).

In conclusion, let's consider our Lord as our example. Notice how Paul used Jesus to discuss these very points: *“We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me”* (Romans 15:1-3).