

lead to hurt feelings and a personal dislike of the other person.

3 Love First

Remember that love first seeks to understand someone *before* seeking to be understood. This means that when you truly love a friend, you will seek to understand not just the argument, the concept, or the position, but the person themselves. You'll seek to understand who the person is, what their struggles are, and why they hold the positions they do. You'll seek to understand the other person's capacity to comprehend and process differing views. And then you will let them know that you understand and value them as a friend, as a child of God, regardless of the specific issue under discussion.

The more accurately you understand the other person, the more efficient you can be in your responses. Your understanding not only of

their position, but of their mindset, abilities, and motives, gives you insight into whether the best approach is presenting your views or refraining from doing so. Love wisely realizes that not all people are ready to hear every truth. Jesus said to His disciples, "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear" (John 16:12).

The mature Christian uses godly wisdom to discern what to share with whom, always remembering that the person is more valuable than the argument. This is the application of love, sharing the truth that love directs to be shared to uplift and benefit another, but withholding truths that love determines a person is not ready to handle.

4 Leave Others Free

After being truthful with yourself about whether a person is a friend or merely a friendly acquaintance, after lovingly seeking to understand and value the other person and their position, after presenting what love and wisdom direct to be shared,

then leave the other person free—free to agree or disagree, to accept or reject your views or ideas.

It is only in an atmosphere of freedom that love between friends can grow. It is only in an atmosphere of freedom that hearts and minds are changed. Recognize that new ideas take time to be understood, assimilated, and to replace old ideas. Freedom in your friendships allows each person to be accepted for who they are even if certain ideas or beliefs differ. This is God's design: to present truth in love and leave others free. This is how we grow and thrive.

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To learn more about developing better relationships in an atmosphere of freedom and love, visit comeandreason.com

How to DISAGREE

and Remain FRIENDS



In today's politically charged culture, when saying the wrong thing at the wrong time can get you booted off social media platforms and uninvited to social events, it can be a challenge to maintain friendships and still feel the freedom to express your views.

But whatever your political and social opinions, it is still possible to maintain strong, unbreakable bonds even when you adamantly disagree with someone. But how?

1 Be Honest With Yourself

The first step is to be honest with yourself about whether someone is a friend or merely a friendly acquaintance. This may sound simple, but it is not.

Many believe incorrectly that someone is a friend when they are merely friendly. Social media has magnified this confusion by having you “friend”

others whom you've never met nor know much about.

Failing to recognize this difference will create false expectations in your interactions with acquaintances and their treatment of you, which can be a minefield of miscommunication, misunderstanding, hurt feelings, and conflict. So, thoughtfully and truthfully review who is a real friend and who is merely a friendly acquaintance.

2 Value What's Important

Once you have established who is a genuine friend, you will realize that *real friends are more important to you than the argument*. With real friends, each person knows that the other one genuinely cares about them and that differing viewpoints are not only to be tolerated, but they are also to be appreciated. Different perspectives add to the richness of life, challenge us, create opportunities for growth—but more than this, those perspectives

share aspects of your friends with you and, as you come to understand your friend's views, you come to understand and know *them* better.

Under the umbrella of love, you can have intense debate and disagreement—even blunt, direct, and passionate—because both parties know that they are loved and valued and that every exchange works to bring them closer. Such disagreements on ideas and perspectives may remain while each friend continues to value the other person.

Problems typically arise when we lose focus on valuing the person and make the idea, concept, perspective, or argument more important than the friend. This can occur when the concept under discussion (e.g., religion or politics) is one from which we derive a personal sense of safety, security, and comfort. In other words, if the idea being challenged would make us feel that something is wrong with us, cause us to feel guilt as if we had done wrong, or increase fear and insecurity, then

our own insecurities, fears, and guilt and the need to make ourselves feel better can cause us to interpret the other person's arguments as an attack against us personally.

You can avoid this by stepping back in your own heart and mind and reaffirming your personal value of being a lover of truth. Once you make that a personal priority, you'll never fear new ideas or perspectives that challenge your views because you realize that we are all finite creatures who can't know everything. The only way people grow is to be willing to have their views challenged, to reason through the evidences, and to assimilate better views when they are convinced of their worth.

True friends are the ones with whom you can safely have your ideas challenged and help you grow. But when you are not friends, when love does not permeate the relationship, then as disagreement intensifies, you become vulnerable to feeling personally attacked—and this can