

Chiggers in Every Congregation

The Eastside church in Bowling Green, Kentucky recently concluded a very successful gospel meeting. Gerry Sandusky from Madison, Indiana did the preaching, and our building was full each night Monday through Friday as he walked us through the book of First Peter, with special emphasis on the importance of holy living. Brother Sandusky has a unique way with words (to put it mildly!). Those who attended the meeting will long remember his description of difficult people – both “in” & “out of” the local church – as **HUMAN CHIGGERS!** Similarly, Mark Copeland writes about those Christians he calls *high-maintenance*, but with all deference to Mark, I much prefer Brother Sandusky’s depiction.

I have known some *human chiggers* – people who have such a way of “getting under my skin” and causing almost constant irritation. It occurs to me as I write this that I may have been a *human chigger* myself to some down through the years – if so, my *sincere* apologies!

As Christians we must always try to get along with those people around us, especially with other Christians. That does not mean we will always agree, or even that we must always agree. But we also should not intentionally be looking for opportunities to anger and upset people. Paul tells us in Romans 12:18, “*If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.*” This verse implies that it will not always be possible, but that we should try. What are some things we can do to “relieve the itch” of *human chiggers*?

Speak With Respect

Disagreements and misunderstandings will happen, but this is no excuse to treat others disrespectfully. God’s Word tells us that we should speak to others with love and grace, even if we have to deal strongly with them. Respect should be our guide. Our speech should be kind, but firm when necessary (cf. Eph. 4:15; Prov. 15:1; Col. 4:6).

Know When to Walk Away

Sometimes it is better to walk away from a conflict than to continue it. This is not freedom to walk away from everything – there are things worth fighting for. But there are also things that ultimately just aren't worth your time. After David was anointed king, but before he took the throne, he had to deal with a *human chigger* – King Saul. God had already rejected Saul from being king over Israel, and David realized that was a fight between Saul and God. This is the same man who years before stood up for God and fought on behalf of God when facing Goliath. David had the wisdom to know when it was time to fight and when it was time to walk away and allow God to handle the problem (1 Samuel 24:10).

Examine Yourself First

Before we can effectively deal with the problems in others, we must take care of ourselves. In Matthew 7:3-5, Jesus tells about someone with a large piece of wood sticking out of his eye who is trying to assist another person who has a speck of dust in his. Don't be that person. Go to God and deal with your own faults before you try to correct others. When you humbly approach God first to deal with your own sins and shortcomings, then you will know how to more gently deal with a difficult person (see also Matt. 6:14-15).

Pray For Them

In the book of 1 Corinthians, Paul had to deal with many problems in that local church. However, he began the book (1 Cor. 1:3-4) by saying that he was praying for them. He certainly gave them the correction they needed, some of it in strong language, but he began with prayer. He then closed the book (1 Cor. 16:23-24) by asking for God's grace on the Corinthian believers (see also Matt. 5:44-45).

You Might Have to Agree To Disagree

Of course, ignoring a problem does not make it go away. However, there are some disagreements that just cannot be quickly settled, and sometimes even “great” men cannot avoid conflict. The Apostle Paul had a disagreement with Barnabas (Acts 15:37-40). However, they were able to deal with their conflict by agreeing to disagree on the issue. The Bible does not say who was right or wrong; it just says that they split up and, in consequence, accomplished much more than they might have accomplished if they had stayed together. As a side note, Paul later wrote that he wanted John Mark (the cause of the conflict) to join him in the work because Paul could see he was profitable (2 Tim. 4:11).

Treat People with Love

Since we all have to deal with *human chiggers* from time to time, maybe the best way to sum up is just to remember always to deal with all people with love. Love the unsaved in such a way that they will want to know more about God. Love them so that their criticisms and disagreements will become insignificant. Love your brother and sister in Christ in a manner that will help them see that their conflict with you is petty and unimportant. Your love may bring conviction to the saved or unsaved to help them turn to God for forgiveness.

- *Biblical Insights* Reprint Article by Gary Kerr