

# Why Do Disagreements Happen?



## SABBATH—OCTOBER 6

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Jeremiah 3:12, 13; Judges 17:6; 1 Kings 12:1–16; 1 Corinthians 1:10; Acts 20:25–31.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “‘Wisdom begins with fear and respect for the LORD. Knowledge of [about] the Holy One leads to understanding’” (Proverbs 9:10, ERV).

**DURING OLD TESTAMENT TIMES** special messengers from God told Israel to obey God's commands. These messengers warned God's people about the dangers of not obeying God. What happened when God's people did not obey? Their disobedience led to disagreement. Disobedience led them away from God. God wanted His people to obey His laws. When God's people obeyed His laws, then the law kept His people safe from the bad things that happened when they sinned. God wanted His people to obey His laws because He wanted to make them holy. God wanted His people to live holy lives among the other people around them who did not know God. What happened when God's people followed God's plan to obey His law? Then they became strong people. They had peace. They turned away from the false worship that was going on all around them. God wanted His people to be holy so that they could witness to the people all around them (Deuteronomy 4:5, 6).

Yes, God wanted His people to stay loyal to Him. God promised to bless them in a big way if they obeyed Him. He also wanted His people to bless other people, just as He blessed His own people. But God's people chose to disobey Him. Their disobedience led to many problems. One of those problems was disagreement.



**God wanted His people to be holy and to witness to the people all around them.**

**COME BACK TO GOD! (Jeremiah 3:12, 13)**

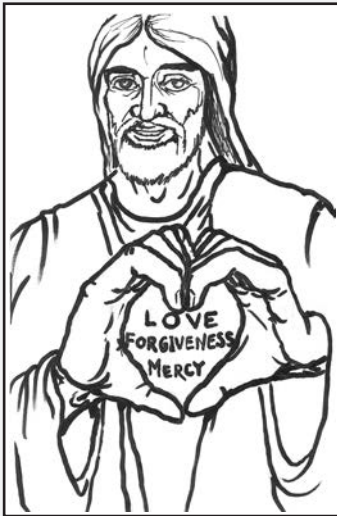
The history of God's people, Israel, is filled with stories about how they do not obey God. There also are many stories in the Bible about how Israel turns back to God, only to turn away from Him again. Israel does this same thing again and again. When God's people obey God's plan, they enjoy peace and life. But when God's people disobey God and do what they want, then wars and disagreements fill their lives. God knows Israel will not obey Him. So, He gives His people a special plan to help them avoid doing evil and the bad things that happen when they sin.

**Read Deuteronomy 28:1–14. What good things does God promise to give His people if they obey Him?**

**In Jeremiah 3:14–18, God asks Israel to turn away from sin and come back to Him. What do these verses tell us about God's love? How patient is God with His people?**

The book of Jeremiah shows us something very wonderful about God. It shows us how much love, forgiveness, and mercy God has in His heart for His people. God's people break His law. They fight each other. They worship false gods. But God never stops inviting His people to turn away from their sins and come back to Him. God promises to give His people new lives. He continues to promise them a better future if they will come back to Him (Jeremiah 3:12, 13).

Jeremiah 3:12, 13 is God's special message to His people. God gave it to Jeremiah to give to Israel. Jeremiah gave this message to God's people at a time when they did not obey God's law. It is true that King Josiah started making changes for the better when he ruled. But after that time, most people did not stay loyal to God or obey His laws. Sin, selfish hearts, and idol worship destroyed the lives of God's people. The more the people disobeyed God, the more they suffered. God sent Jeremiah to beg His people to turn back to Him. God had a better future planned for His people. He wanted to bless His people with peace, good health, and long life. God wanted so much to give these gifts to His people. But first, His people needed to promise to live by faith and obey Him.



The book of Jeremiah shows us how much love, forgiveness, and mercy God has in His heart for His people.

**How has your own experience taught you that it is better to obey God than to disobey Him?**

**“THE PEOPLE DID ANYTHING THEY THOUGHT WAS RIGHT” (Judges 17:6, Nlrv)**

The book of Judges tells us about the bad things that happened when Israel did not obey God. Soon after Israel started living in Canaan, they began to worship idols and to follow the false religions of the people around them. God warned Israel not to do these things. But as we shall see, these problems were not Israel’s only troubles.

**Read in Judges 17:6 and Judges 21:25 about the other problems that Israel had. What were these new problems? How did these new problems start? What do they teach us about how problems can start among God’s people?**

These verses teach us what happens when everyone does whatever they want. There will be separation and disagreement among God’s people. His people will enjoy peace and agreement when they are loyal to God and obey Him and His Special Agreement. Another name for God’s Special Agreement with His people is His Covenant. God’s people agreed to the Covenant with God. But then God’s people started doing what they thought was right instead of what God said was right. That led them down the wrong road. We are all sinners. But God does not turn away from us or leave us to decide what is best or right on our own. He shows us the right road to walk on. We cannot find this road without God’s help. As sinners, we will wander away from the right road and go in the wrong direction.

**Judges 2:11–13 and Judges 3:5–7 tell us about the spiritual health of Israel and show us how people behaved in the time of the judges. What do these verses teach us about those times? How spiritual were the people back then?**

“God’s people decided to use God’s gifts for themselves. They did not use them to help other people. They grew greedy and selfish. Then the idol worshipers who lived around them lost all respect for God’s people. God’s own people gave non-Jews a reason to misunderstand God’s love and the laws of His kingdom.”—Ellen G. White, *Prophets [special messengers] and Kings*, pages 20, 21, adapted.

**What “picture” of God do your actions and words show to the people around you?**



**God does not turn away from us or leave us to decide what is best or right on our own. He shows us the right road to walk on.**

## THE TIME WHEN THE HEBREW PEOPLE SPLIT APART (1 Kings 12:1–16)

God's people did not fall off the road to Truth in one night. The bad things that happened to them did not happen quickly either. But God's people made many wrong choices. Over time, these bad choices led to some awful problems for God's people.

**Read the story of King Rehoboam in 1 Kings 12:1–16. What caused the awful separation between God's people?**

“King Rehoboam and his government did not understand God's plan for Israel. The king's team of leaders did not have much experience at all. The king's leaders did not listen to the people. The people met with the leaders at Shechem. The people asked the leaders to make changes to help the people. The leaders had the chance to improve the country. But they failed to understand the real cause for evil or good. Because of that, the leaders grew weak in power. They lost the chance to make the lives of many people better. The leaders did not want to remove the heavy workload off the people that King Solomon put on them. The leaders wanted the people to work even harder. The leaders' plans went fully against God's plan. The leaders' decisions made the people think that the leaders did not care about them at all. The leaders showed that they were not wise. Their behavior showed no love. In this way, the king and his leaders showed that they were proud.”—Ellen G. White, *Prophets [special messengers] and Kings*, page 90, adapted.



“The leaders did not want to remove the heavy workload off the people that King Solomon put on them.”  
—Ellen G. White, *Prophets [special messengers] and Kings*, page 90, adapted.

**Proverbs 4:1–9; Proverbs 9:10; and James 1:5 talk about why we need wisdom to make the right decisions. Where does all true wisdom start?**

King Rehoboam made a very bad decision. He chose to force more work on God's people. The king asked for advice from two groups of leaders. Then he chose to listen to the advice of the young leaders who were his own age. They had no real experience as leaders. These young leaders told Rehoboam to be tough on the people. In the end, Rehoboam showed that he was a bully and did not know how to lead. His decision separated God's people into two countries. This separation was never God's plan for Israel. What is worse, it really did not need to happen.



## SEPARATION IN THE CHURCH AT CORINTH (1 Corinthians 1:10)

As we saw yesterday, disagreement and separation were problems among God's people during Old Testament times. But these problems happened in New Testament times too.

Here is one example of separation that Paul writes about. In his First Letter to the Corinthians, Paul begs God's people to get along and to agree with each other about Bible truth. When Paul was in Ephesus, he heard that the church at Corinth broke up into different groups. So, in his letter, Paul starts by talking about the need for getting along and for agreement. He says it is important to stop separation and fights. Paul worries deeply about the division in the church at Corinth. He wants to give the church wise advice to help it solve this awful problem.

**In 1 Corinthians 1:10 we read about the separation in the church at Corinth. What seems to be the reason for the separation and disagreements among church members?**

Someone from Chloe's group told Paul about the problems in the church at Corinth. Paul grew worried about his Christian brothers and sisters there. The first words in Paul's letter show that his interest in the Corinthian believers is deep and real. Paul's answer to the problem is to remind the believers that they are to be fully joined together as one group and to be "in complete agreement in all that you think" (1 Corinthians 1:10, NIV). Paul wanted the reasons for the disagreement and separation to stop.

Paul tells the Corinthian believers to remember that Jesus asked them to follow Him. They must not follow any human person, not even a person with many talents or special skills. Paul tells them that separating themselves into little groups when they disagree with each other is not God's plan. Paul tells the Corinthians that real Christian agreement starts with their knowing Jesus and accepting His death for their sins on the cross (1 Corinthians 1:13).

What does this truth say to us as Seventh-day Adventists? It tells us that we must treasure our peace and agreement as precious gifts from God. Separation and disagreement can destroy our peace today. So, we must let God's love always control our hearts.

**How can we avoid the dangers that Paul talks about?**



**As Seventh-day Adventists, we must treasure our peace and agreement as precious gifts from God.**

**“‘HUNGRY WOLVES WILL COME’ ” (Acts 20:29, NLV)**

**In Acts 20:25–31, Paul warns the Ephesian church leaders about the danger that will come in the future. What danger does Paul warn them about? What does Paul say the leaders must do to stop the problem from happening?**

In his work for God, Paul often meets people who work against him. So, Paul knows how important it is to protect the truths about Jesus’ Good News. When Paul preaches his goodbye sermon to the Ephesian leaders, Paul uses the picture story about the watchman in Ezekiel 33:1–6. This story clearly shows the Ephesian leaders that they were responsible for protecting the Good News. The leaders must be loyal “shepherds” who watch over their “flocks.”

Paul uses the words “‘hungry wolves’ ” (Acts 20:29, NLV) or “‘wild wolves’ ” (Nlrv) to describe false teachers. Paul’s words remind us of Jesus’ warning about false teachers. Jesus warns that false teachers will come “‘pretending to be sheep’ ” (Matthew 7:15, Nlrv). They will “‘look gentle like [the same as] sheep’ ” (ERV). “‘But on the inside they are hungry wolves’ ” (Nlrv). Sure enough, these false teachers came into the church soon after Paul warned the Ephesian leaders about them. The false teachers hurt the minds and hearts of believers in the Asian churches that Paul started. In Ephesians 5:6–14 and Colossians 2:8, we find Paul’s warnings to the churches in Asia Minor. Asia Minor is part of modern Turkey today.



**Jesus warns that false teachers will come “‘pre-  
tending to be sheep’ ” (Matthew 7:15, Nlrv). They will “‘look gentle like [the same as] sheep’ ” (ERV). “‘But on the inside they are hungry wolves’ ” (Nlrv).**

**In 2 Timothy 2:14–19 and 2 Timothy 3:12–17, Paul tells Timothy what to do about false teachers. What advice does Paul give Timothy about how to protect the church?**

First, Paul says it is important to know Bible truth (2 Timothy 2:15). The truth will stop foolish disagreements and false ideas. So, believers must understand Bible truth and teach it to other people. Problems and ideas that do not matter must not be made more important than Bible truth. Only Bible truth will help believers win the fight against sin. Second, Paul tells Timothy to “stay away from people who talk about useless things that are not from God” (2 Timothy 2:16, ERV). Truth alone leads to peace and makes us holy.

**How can we protect our church against false teachings?**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** Read Ellen G. White, “The Rending [splitting apart] of the Kingdom,” pages 87–98, in *Prophets [special messengers] and Kings*; “A Message of [about] Warning and Entreaty [asking for something],” pages 298–308, in *The Acts of the Apostles [leaders and teachers]*.

“The Lord wants His servants to learn how to work together. But some people may think that their skills and the skills of other people are not the same. They think this difference will make it impossible to work together. But they must remember that the people that they try to reach with the truth have different minds too. Some people will turn away from the truth that one of God’s servants shares with them. But these same people will accept the truth when it is shared with them by someone else. So, let that thought help God’s people to work together as one. Their different skills can all be under the control of the same Spirit. Then God’s workers will show love and a kind spirit in every word and act to everyone. Each worker must do the work that God gives him. Then the prayer of Jesus for His followers to join as one will be answered. People everywhere will know that these workers are Jesus’ followers.”—Ellen G. White, *Gospel [about the Good News] Workers*, page 483, adapted.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 Today, many thinkers do not accept the idea that God’s law can decide what is right or wrong for everyone on earth. Why is this thinking so dangerous? How does it lead to the confusion and wild behavior that the Bible warns about?
- 2 Think some more about King Rehoboam’s story and how God’s people were separated (1 Kings 12). What lessons does this story teach us today?
- 3 How can church leaders and members stop disagreement in the church? Why is it important to stop these problems before they grow worse? How can we as church members take care not to fall into the same trap that some members in Corinth fell into?
- 4 Proverbs 6:16–19 talks about how to prevent disagreements. What does it tell us to do to stop disagreements from happening in the local church?



“Some people will turn away from the truth that one of God’s servants shares with them. But these same people will accept the truth when it is shared with them by someone else. So, let that thought help God’s people to work together as one.”—Ellen G. White, *Gospel [about the Good News] Workers*, page 483, adapted.