

Roots in Ripon

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Chuck Roots

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Agreeing to Disagree

When I was a kid, my parents had very close friends that they played bridge with either in our home or theirs a couple of times a month. Pop and Ted played golf regularly as well. I learned a great lesson in life from watching these four friends interact with each other. I am in their debt.

The lesson I learned is that folks who are the best of friends can vehemently disagree and not have it adversely affect their friendship. My step father (Pop) was a classic New England Democrat. Don't confuse the Democrats of today with the Democrats from the 1950s. In fact, today's Democrats have shifted so far to the left that they have embraced socialism over a democratic republic. Pop was a strong patriot who at age 31 enlisted in the Marine Corps during WWII. When it came to social issues, Pop tended to lean more to the left. My mother was the same even though she was born and raised in Texas. Their friends were also Democrats but much more liberal in their views across the board. When it came to child discipline, they were miles apart. My folks practiced "old school" discipline, whereas their friends had bought into Dr. Benjamin Spock's philosophy.

I remember hearing them have heated discussions about this policy, or that Supreme Court decision quite frequently. Yet at the end of the evening, they remained the best of friends. This made a big impact on me. The more I thought about it, the more it made sense to me that you could have differences of opinion and remain friends.

As I moved from childhood to being an adult my world views were growing apart from my parents. We returned from three years in Europe in 1963, just a few months from the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. That singular tragedy affected me and my generation that simply has no comparison, even 9/11. I was drawn more toward conservative thinking by life events; not any one person. Pop, mom and I would periodically have heated debates over a myriad of things. Even though we rarely came to an agreement, whenever the conversation ended, or mom had dinner ready, it was over. We loved each other and nothing was going to get in the way of that. When Pop passed away in 1992, Ted's son, Steve, flew from his home in Connecticut to attend the funeral in Fresno, California. In turn, when Ted passed away many years later, sister Joy and I traveled to New Jersey to pay our respects. A few years ago my mother passed away. Steve again made the journey west to attend the funeral. We were all friends and we loved each other.

Today is a far cry from what I experienced growing up. The pervading attitude seems to be, "If you don't agree with me, then you're my enemy!" How did we descend into this type of thinking?

Watching the news on TV this past week has been somewhat unnerving. Groups who are opposed to the Trump Administration are marching in protest carrying signs and placards spewing the vilest and most vulgar of words. The

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speakers commandeering the microphone were impossibly mendacious, revealing a hatred for anyone who did not agree with them that bordered on mental derangement. Then there was the school teacher who, in front of her students, took a water gun and squirted it at an image of President Trump flashed on the chalk board, screaming "Die! Die!"

And what of the mentally retarded young man accosted by some black thugs who terrorized him simply for being a Trump supporter, all the while recording the event and posting it on the Internet. These are not isolated incidents. A cursory glance at the news is quite telling with terrible stories of hatred and violence.

We need to be very careful of such activity. In 1930s Germany, the problems and failures of the nation, following a humiliating defeat in WWI and a plummeting economy, were laid on the backs of specific people groups. Jews were an early target, with gypsies, mongoloids, and any other easy target added to the list. People who once had been neighbors, now were enemies, all occurring virtually overnight. You don't think it could happen here in America? Think again! When people become fearful, a target, an enemy, is easy to create and blame. The history of the world is replete with such heinous activity when people are frightened.

Are Americans fearful today? You bet they are! One of the easiest ways to determine this is the sale of firearms. Personal safety, and the safety of one's family, has caused countless citizens of all races and backgrounds to apply for a CCW (Carry Concealed Weapon) license. There is an ever-growing mistrust of our neighbor. And residents know the police cannot always respond quickly enough to prevent criminal activity. Cities and counties across America are terribly backlogged in processing the voluminous surge in requests for CCWs.

The arguments and debates of yesteryear seem as nothing compared to what we are facing in the world today. Can we as Americans trust each other again even if we don't agree on everything? I sure hope so.

I'm reminded that Jesus said, "Love your neighbor as yourself." But did he mean for us to love only those who agreed with us? No, this is not what he meant. What does "love your neighbor" mean? The challenge to each of us is, "Am I willing to live God's way?" Well, are you?