

How to See "Eye To Eye" Religiously

Why do some people not see religious things the way we see them? Why is there so much difference between what we teach and what the denominations profess? Do we not all have the same Bible? Are we not all trying to serve the same God? Do we not all believe in the same Savior? These are perplexing questions, and they are not easily answered to everyone's satisfaction.

Basically, our understanding of the Scriptures differs from the majority of the religious world because we operate on a different principle of interpretation. To most religious people "truth" is relative, adjusting freely to different times and circumstances. For us, however, truth is truth. It is unalterable, unchangeable, and everlasting. But did "we" just arbitrarily decide this would be our regard for truth? Not at all. God's own word boldly claims "thy word is truth" (John 17:17) and "the word of the Lord is right; and all His works are done in truth." (Psalm 33:4) While there are scoffers at the idea of absolute truth, we accept Bible teaching that such does exist, and we are determined to know it. Pilate's piercing question, "What is truth?" (John 18:38) was prompted by these words from Jesus: "I have come into the world that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

This then, is the basis upon which we may come to see religious matters alike. There must be a commitment to the same standard of truth. No one would ever attempt to use differing standards of measurement if building a house, marking off a football field, or sewing a garment. This would guarantee error and disaster. Twelve inches must equal one foot on all our rulers if we desire uniformity. There must be a healthy regard and respect for the Bible on the part of every religious person in order for understanding to occur. Without this common devotion to God's word, all efforts to see things the same will fail. In order to come to agreement on matters essential to salvation, we must begin where we agree. From this point we must study the Scriptures, resolving differences as we go along. Major problems of difference are solved in small steps, and then we can be united in Christ. But we will never see things the same if we cannot agree on the existence, necessity, and location of the truth.

No Bible discussion is profitable unless every participant is a truth seeker. If everyone concerned really wants the truth, then coming to an agreement and an understanding of truth will be achievable. Believe it or not, it is possible to discuss religious differences without becoming rude or creating hurt feelings. People who love the truth are not concerned with who is right, but with what is right. Every truth seeker is willing to surrender any position if it is false. There is no other honorable course for an honest man. An honest man will seek the truth, and when he finds it he will believe it. "Buy the truth, and do not sell it, also wisdom and instruction and understanding." (Proverbs 23:23).

- by Mark W. White

When Church Is Boring

What do you do when you find that church is boring? It's time for a change! Now the question is, change what?

Many folks think the answer is change the church. I just read an article about a new church created for men only, men who find church boring. Discarding more traditional environments, they meet in a gymnasium one Saturday evening a month. A rock band provides the entertainment. The preacher speaks in front of the scoreboard, with the clock running. He guarantees to have them out in one hour! This sort of innovation is not unusual. Many religious leaders hail it as a positive development, a way to reach out to those who otherwise would have no interest in church.

Some might not go that far, yet they still insist on change. Contemporary music, drama, and short sermons that are little more than pep talks are the order of the day. Clapping and cheering have replaced old-fashioned amens. *Celebration* and *praise* are the buzzwords, with the world's calendar dictating the subject celebrated.

Malachi lived at a time when people found "church" boring. Speaking of Israel's worship, God said through the Prophet, "You also say, 'My, how tiresome it is!' And you disdainfully sniff at it" (Mal. 1:13).

God proposed two changes to these who turned up their noses at His worship. One was to just stay home. "Oh that there were one among you who would shut the gates, that you might not uselessly kindle fire on My altar! I am not pleased with you" (v. 11). The better solution, the change He preferred, was to repent. "If you do not listen, and if you do not take it to heart to give honor to My name," says the Lord, "then I will send the curse upon you" (2:2). Notice what God did not approve: changing the structure or activities of worship to accommodate individual tastes.

The preacher can work to make his sermons more interesting, the song leader can try to select more meaningful hymns, and the one who leads in prayer can give more thought to what he says. However, when worship as God directed is boring, the main change that is needed is in the heart of the worshiper.

- by Frank Himmel

'A Chip on His Shoulder'

This common expression conjures up an easy mental picture. A fella places a chip of wood on his shoulder, and then he walks around waiting for someone to knock it off. He is spoiling for a fight, and ready to react at the slightest provocation. He usually finds his opportunity in short order.

The 'chip-wearer' is quick to take offense. He was just waiting for some petty reason to vent his anger and bitterness, and once he has found it, he will not let it go. His reaction is typically inappropriate and unreasonable. When others appeal to logic, common sense, and rational response, this angry man will not hear of it. He is mad and intends to stay that way.

Dealing with such a person is always a difficult and trying experience. In a workplace, this fella can sidetrack an entire operation. In a community or neighborhood, he can cause trouble for people far and wide. In a family, you can expect grief at every reunion and gathering. And in the church he will definitely cause strife, contention, and division. Sadly these scenarios develop all too often.

God's Word is plain concerning the man with the chip on his shoulder. Consider:

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these . . . wrath, strife, . . . envyings, . . . and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."
(Galatians 5:19-21)

"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." (Ephesians 4:31-32)

Children of God cannot afford to carry a chip on their shoulder. Doing so endangers the soul. Think!

- by Greg Gwin