

Playing the Devil's Advocate

You've probably heard the phrase, "I'm just playing the devil's advocate." Usually, this means someone is arguing for a position they don't necessarily believe, just to test the strength of the other side. While that can be useful in certain situations, it's worth pausing to ask: should Christians ever be found "playing for the devil's side," even hypothetically? In the workplace or classroom, this can sometimes help people see a different perspective. When a person takes a position opposed to the truth in order to spark debate, what may seem harmless can sometimes plant seeds of doubt, justify sin, or weaken someone else's faith.

Satan is called "...a liar and the father of it." (John 8:44) and the one who "...walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." (1 Peter 5:8). He doesn't need us lending him our voice. In fact, we are warned "nor give place to the devil." (Ephesians 4:27).

Instead of arguing against truth just to see what happens, we should strive to defend the truth, encourage others in faith, and point people closer to Christ. Paul charged Timothy to "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching." (2 Timothy 4:2). Peter tells us to "always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;" (1 Peter 3:15). That's a defense of the hope we have in Christ, not of the devil's lies.

There is nothing wrong with asking hard questions or even examining arguments made by those teaching error. There's a time and place for that, but we must always approach God's Word with reverence and sincerity, not with the attitude of "devil's advocacy." Let us be sure that in every discussion, every class, and every conversation, that we are not giving the enemy more room to work.

So the next time you feel tempted to "play devil's advocate," consider whether your words are building up or tearing down. The world already has plenty of "devil's advocates." What it desperately needs are Christians who boldly and lovingly advocate for the Lord. Let us commit ourselves like Paul wrote to the Corinthians, to be "ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God." (2 Corinthians 5:20).

- by Josh McCord

Willing Submission

In times of discord it is not unusual to hear the plaintive cry, "Why can't we all just get along?" Confrontations often arise and are exacerbated by those who are unwilling to submit to others. From family problems to labor disputes, from church divisions to war, unsubmitive attitudes are at the core.

For many people submission is a negative word that conjures up visions of victimization at worst and weakness at best. However, submission is consistently presented positively in Scripture. The English word 'submit' means: "to yield to governance or authority; to commit to the discretion or judgment of another; to defer to the opinion or authority of another." The dictionary lists "yield" as a synonym. The Greek word translated "submit" literally means to "yield under."

Where do conflicts come from? They come from our selfish desires and pride (Jas. 4:1-10). When we approach our relationships in this life (with God or anyone else) on a "me first" basis, then we are unsubmitive. This causes friction. We are called upon to humble ourselves before almighty God and let Him do the exalting. Of course, He has the ability to force us to conform, but it is His desire that we willingly choose to submit ourselves to Him (1 Tim. 2:4).

- by Andy Diestelkamp

Have Convictions -- Will Stand!

Again I say that I thank God for those Christians who are able to make proper discernment on weakness and strength, quantity and quality; who refuse to be swayed from Bible convictions by discouragements that weed out the weaklings. These know the WHY of 'a falling away.' (1 Cor. 11:9) They know that part of our warfare must be fought with 'spiritual wickedness in high places;' that sin and error crouch in camouflaged corners of even the kingdom of God. It takes a Gideon's

army with broken pitchers of light to flush them from their dark hidings. This army has heard the short, sharp blast of the bugle call -- 'Stand, Therefore Stand.' We are entrenched behind the impregnable citadel of Bible convictions. Too soberly convicted to be flushed out by the tear-gas bombs of sentimentalism; too confident by the majority-that-God-makes to be routed by the bombardment of 'multitudes on the other side;' too near the 'Captain of our salvation' to be intimidated by the screaming mischief-missiles of innuendoes, slander, and prejudicial epithets. Yes, we "Have Convictions - Will Stand."

- by **J.W. Evans**

Unhappy Marriages

A Tennessee news story told of a man that held up a bank at gunpoint. Nothing new there – but what he did afterwards was really odd. After the teller gave him the money, he went over and sat down in the lobby. The police, of course, came and arrested him. His explanation? He said he would rather be in jail than have to live with his wife! This man's actions confirm Solomon's observation: "It is better to dwell in the corner of the housetop (or a jail cell – gg), than with a brawling woman and in a wide house" (Proverbs 25:24).

Sadly, many husbands and wives continue to live miserably in contentious relationships that manifest no love and offer no peace. Further, they keep on violating the clear and direct commands of God – and thus fail to enjoy the blessings that God designed into the marriage relationship.

The Scriptures give clear instructions that – when obeyed – will bring marital success and true happiness. Consider: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church . . . Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it . . . So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church . . . let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband" (Ephesians 5:22-33).

"Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord" (Proverbs 18:22). But this is only true when both husband and wife observe God's wisdom in the marriage relationship. Think!

- by **Greg Gwin**