

When Should We Deal With Controversial Issues?

There are only two times when it is proper to deal with controversial subjects in the church: (1) when the church is bothered with them, and (2) when it is not. That may sound a bit "corny" but it is just plain fact. The philosophy that we should never trouble trouble until trouble troubles us may sound reasonable, but it is borne out neither in scripture nor history.

Religious controversy is prima face evidence of error. It does not always mean that one side is right and the other wrong, for both may be wrong. But it is a singular fact that both cannot be right because truth never contradicts truth. That means that all Christians must dust off their Bibles and find out just what is the truth. Paul admonished, "Be not unwise but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:17). So there is no room for the excuse, "Well I just can't understand." If both can't be right, then every Christian is duty-bound to find out which one is, or if either is.

Religious error is like a physical disease, as long as it exists anywhere in the world, it poses an insidious danger to Christians everywhere in the world. Error is like a disease. It does not usually remain confined to one particular area. It has cousins, uncles, aunts, grandparents, grand children, and even good friends, and through them it may travel right to our front door (it often uses the back door!) and creeps in unawares (Jude 3). Paul spoke of false teachers' words as eating like a cancer (2 Tim 2:17): "And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus." (Don't fail to notice that Paul called the names of the false teachers, those spreading the disease. This is important to know so they can be quarantined!)

The world would have been dead from smallpox long ago had every community waited to vaccinate its citizens until it had an outbreak of the disease. The basic theory of immunization is to vaccinate before the disease strikes. The same thing holds true with pernicious religious error. Paul warned the Ephesian elders of dangers that lay ahead, Acts 20:28-29. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock."

The church or the preacher that delays dealing with error until it strikes really is sacrificing many to the error; for often, once it strikes it is too late to save some. History proves human pride makes it difficult to reverse a commitment. All Christians have a responsibility to stand for truth and against all error. Preachers must guard that which is committed to their trust (1 Tim. 6:20) and elders are with sound doctrine to exhort and convince the gainsayers (Tit. 1:9). He who will not defend the truth is out of harmony with God's word, and fails to honor his trust.

- by James P. Needham

Jesus on Divorce and Remarriage

The one who divorces: "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery ... and if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery." (Mark 10:11-12)

The one who is divorced: "Whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery." (Matthew 5:32)

The third party Involved: "And whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery." (Matthew 5:32) "And whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery." (Matthew 19:9)

The one exception: "Whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery." (Matthew 5:32) "Whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery." (Matthew 19:9)

The summary: "Whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality..." "and marries another, commits adultery..." "causes her to commit adultery..." and "whoever marries her commits adultery"

Ask Your Preacher Where the Bible says . . .

- "Baptism" means sprinkling
Compare his answer with Romans 6:3,4
- Preachers should be called "Reverend"
Compare his answer with Psalms 111:9
- A Christian can not fall from grace
Compare his answer with Galatians 5:4
- Sincerity alone is pleasing to God
Compare his answer with Matthew 7:21
- We should use human creed books
Compare his answer with Proverbs 14:12

- by David Padfield

Are You Looking For Work?

Occasionally we hear complaints from some Christians that they "just aren't being put to work," or that they "just aren't being used." What is generally meant is that these individuals are not frequently being called upon to word prayers during the public worship; or perhaps they are rarely scheduled to help pass the Lord's Supper; or it may be that their opportunities to lead singing or give a talk are few and far between.

Let us plainly state that all the above mentioned activities are good and important. We want to encourage every male Christian to grow and develop in all these vital roles. But, having said that, we would also urge everyone to realize that these things do not, in and of themselves, constitute full and complete service to the Lord.

There are so many other opportunities to serve in areas where we urgently need your help. "Lift up your eyes and look" (John 4:35). You are surrounded by lost souls that need to be taught about salvation. Your own knowledge of the Scriptures needs to be increased by diligent study and personal preparation. You are needed to help encourage and strengthen some of your brethren who are weak and struggling. Do you get the point? Many opportunities await the humble, faithful servant who is looking to work for the Lord.

Don't be deceived into thinking that if you are seldom used in the public assemblies you are, therefore, not being 'used' effectively. And, likewise, don't fall into the trap of thinking that if you are frequently called upon to pray, lead singing, or wait on the table you are necessarily doing all of the real work that God desires of you. Duties performed during the worship assemblies are important, but they are not the absolute test of your service to the Lord.

- by Greg Gwin