

Moderation in Doctrinal Stability

People who are useful in the Lord's service are balanced in their thinking. They maintain moderation of the mind. They know what they believe and why they believe it, and are not given to radical fluctuations of thought.

A Study in Contrasts

Two men are teachers of God's word. Both are conscientious men who love truth. The first man, however, is easily swayed by whatever he reads and hears. He frequently changes positions on doctrinal issues. Wanting to be independent in his thinking, he is quick to reject traditional "Church of Christ" thinking. He adopts into his thinking anything that, on the surface, sounds reasonable to him. He loves to come across some new, exciting "gem" that will set his teaching apart from the old, stale teaching that people have heard for years. Above all, he wants his teaching to be thought provoking and challenging, different and exciting, new and fresh in its approach.

The second man wants his teaching to be challenging and thought provoking, too, but he recognizes that one does not have to reject that which is tried and proven in order to be challenging and independent. He is not surprised to find that his convictions are similar to those of others who have labored to separate error from truth, traditionalism from the pure word of God, sectarianism from the unity found in Christ. After all, he shares the same goals and studies the same book. He sees no virtue in being different from them. He has come to solid conclusions based on his study of the Scriptures and is not easily swayed from those conclusions. He finds truth challenging because it is truth.

The first man tends to be "tossed" to and fro, and "carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Ephesians 4:14). His hearers never know what to expect from him next. One thing they can be sure of: whatever "kick" he is on at the time will come out in his lessons, for every new concept seems to become an obsession.

The second man has his heart "established with grace" (Hebrews 13:9); he is "grounded and settled" (Colossians 1:23). He questions positions he has held, and is forced by his own personal honesty and integrity to change positions occasionally, but he acts very slowly and cautiously in doing so. He keeps many questions that arise in his mind to himself, for he recognizes that they are not vital to his own salvation or to the salvation of others.

The first man unnecessarily disturbs others with his teaching, leaving them with more questions than answers. Some of his conclusions are dangerous. And though he later recognizes their danger and discards them, he has already, in his haste, planted seeds of error in the hearts of his hearers. His influence is hurt because brethren are afraid of him justifiably afraid. His usefulness in the kingdom is greatly affected.

Questions To Be Considered

We would suggest to our first man that before he creates trouble among God's people and hurts his own influence, he might ask the following questions.

1. Am I sure of the conclusions I have reached? Is it possible that I have overlooked some pertinent scripture or argument that would negate my conclusions?
2. Am I sure that my conclusions have not been tainted by prejudice, disillusionment, bitterness, jealousy, emotional considerations, or some other factor that can adversely affect one's thinking?
3. Even if I am sure of my conclusions, is the point I am stressing vital, of sufficient importance to justify problems?
4. Have I allowed these conclusions to become an obsession? Do I find myself talking about them frequently in Bible classes? In sermons? In private discussions? Do I find my reading of the Scriptures somewhat "colored" by these new concepts?
5. Is it possible that in my teaching I am glorying in new and deep and fresh approaches rather than in the simple message of the gospel and the Christ who is the center of that message?

We are not encouraging compromise; nor are we suggesting that one must gain brotherhood approval for his conclusions before teaching them. We are saying, however, that caution dictates

that one go slowly in adopting new concepts and be even more cautious in teaching them. "Let your moderation be known to all."

- by **Bill Hall**

Symptoms of Hunger

We all know how irritable we can become when we are hungry. Short-tempered, unreasonable, impatient, self-centered, and mean spirited are only a few of the adjectives which could be used to describe us when hunger strikes.

What most fail to realize is that the same symptoms can be manifested when we are not receiving the spiritual food we need. Some obviously have a spiritual hunger which they are not satisfying with the Word of God. It shows in the way they act!

- **selected**

Should We Let the Kids "Decide for Themselves"?

Occasionally we hear parents who say that they don't want to force religion on their children. These misguided folks think they are doing their kids a favor by letting them "decide for themselves". They're afraid that there will be some resentment in the children later if religion has been 'crammed down their throats'.

May we be absolutely blunt in response? That is one of the stupidest ideas anyone ever suggested!!! We force many things on our children. We insist that that they bathe, brush their teeth, change their clothes, etc. We "cram" education down their throats by making them attend school regularly. We demand that they do their homework. We force them to eat good food, get adequate rest, and do other things that are important to their health and development. We do all of this because we know it is in their best interest. And, we do it even when the kids don't like it. Why is it that this common sense approach is neglected by parents who are determined to "let the kids decide for themselves" when it comes to religion?

Dr. James Dobson writes: "There is a critical period when certain kinds of instruction are easier in the life of children. There is a brief period during childhood when youngsters are vulnerable to religious training. Their concepts of right and wrong are formulated during this time, and their view of God begins to solidify. The opportunity of that period must be seized when it is available. The absence or misapplication of instruction through that prime-time period may place a severe limitation on the depth of the child's later devotion to God. When parents withhold indoctrination from their small children, allowing them to "decide for themselves", the adults are almost guaranteeing that their youngsters will "decide" in the negative."

God's word has always taught us the truth on this subject: "*Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it*" (Proverbs 22:6).

- by **Greg Gwin**