

II. HOW SHOULD A CHRISTIAN REACT WHEN HE HAS A DISAGREEMENT WITH A FELLOW-BELIEVER?

When we have a disagreement...

A. WE SHOULD REALIZE THAT IT'S NOT WRONG FOR US TO HAVE DIFFERENCES OF OPINION.

1. Having different opinions can be profitable to us and this is no doubt the wisdom in having a multitude of counselors (Prov. 11:14; 15:22; 24:6).

I heard a very wise preacher say one time that it's a good practice for a pastor to keep some younger men as well as older men in the office of deacon to maintain a good balance in decision-making.

2. Having a different opinion is allowable as long as it doesn't run contrary to what the Word of God teaches.
 - a. Oftentimes differences of opinion come about as a result of one's own personal convictions.

(1) When it comes to personal convictions we are to be tolerant of one another out of love (Rom. 14:1-6; I Cor. 8:1-13).

(2) When it comes to personal convictions we should not force our convictions upon others. Just because some practice pricks our conscience and makes us feel guilty of wrongdoing, if it's not specifically condemned by the Word of God, it doesn't mean others are wrong to do it.

Oftentimes people who sit under legalistic-type preaching become judgmental of everyone who does not share their same personal convictions.

- b. Notice however if our differences of opinion is contrary to what the Word of God teaches then it is not allowable and should be pointed out in a loving and helpful manner.

I believe this was the situation with Apollos mentioned in Acts 18:24-28. Aquila and Priscilla took on the task of helping him to better understand the Scriptures.

B. WE SHOULD GO ABOUT TO RESOLVE THINGS BEFORE THEY RESULT IN SOMETHING MORE SERIOUS (Prov. 25:8-10).

1. This seems to be the principle the Lord Jesus was giving in the sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:25).

When believers have unresolved differences they oftentimes lead to repeated disagreements and more serious. I know of two men who had repeated disputes over their

property line until finally one shot and killed the other.

2. Notice how the church of Antioch settled their disagreement over the matter of circumcision (Acts 15:1-11).
 - a. Firstly, they sought the counsel and wisdom of Godly leaders (Acts 15:2).
 - b. Secondly, they were willing to abide by the decision of a third-party as the Lord directed them (Acts 15:30-32). This method and use of a Godly and wise third-party is the best way to resolve many conflicts.

C. WE SHOULD TAKE THE HUMBLE SIDE AND LEAVE THE CONSEQUENCES WITH THE LORD.

1. Taking the humble side might mean giving someone else their choice over yours.

This is what Abraham did when a conflict arose between Abraham's herdsmen and Lot's (Gen. 13:5-12).

2. Taking the humble side might mean responding to others with a soft answer (Prov. 15:1).
3. Taking the humble side might mean being defrauded in some way (I Cor. 6:7,8). It should be noted that God gives grace to the individual who shows humility (I Pet. 5:5,6) and as a result God will bless those who take the humble side in conflicts.

D. WE SHOULD AVOID THE USE OF CIVIL AUTHORITIES TO SETTLE OUR DIFFERENCES.

1. Using civil authorities to settle our differences, whether domestic or among believers in a church, runs contrary to the Scriptural plan which believers are exhorted to follow (Matt. 18:15-17).
2. Using civil authorities to settle our differences involves a number of things which are inconsistent and inappropriate for a Christian.
 - a. First of all Christians have the Word of God and the Spirit of God to guide them in making judgments (I Cor. 2:14-16).
 - b. Secondly, going before civil authorities is asking secular people who lack spiritual discernment to judge in spiritual matters (I Cor. 6:1).
 - c. Taking a brother or sister before civil authorities is indicative of two sinful things - revenge and an unwillingness to forgive (Heb. 10:30; Eph. 4:32).

E. WE SHOULD CHOOSE TO DISAGREE AGREEABLY FOR THE SAKE OF THE LORD'S WORK.

1. This means we should not allow our individual differences to keep us from being in one accord as a body of believers (I Cor. 1:10; Phil. 1:27; 2:1,2).
2. This means we should seek an alternative to resolve things in a manner that allows us to keep on serving the Lord. I believe this is what Paul and Barnabas did concerning their disagreement over John Mark (Acts 15:36-40).
3. Notice those who fail to follow this practice will allow themselves to be controlled by the sin nature and used by the devil (Gal. 5:20; James 3:14-18).