



Key Word or Phrase: "Must We AGREE?"

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Scribe's BLOG
www.DYPK.org

"We've never had a cross word between us in sixty years of marriage." Ever heard anything like that? Did you believe it? Did you wonder silently, "Well, bless your old hearts, then how do you communicate?" In Christian fellowship, as in marriage, occasional disagreement is a very normal (and important) part of healthy interaction. If a relationship is to grow, occasional disagreement will be necessary. I know, that doesn't sound especially *religious*, but read on for the Scriptural rationale...

So how should we respond when we find ourselves in disagreement with a fellow Christian concerning a matter as important as interpretation of Scripture? The key to productive management of our inevitable disagreements may be to understand that it is not necessary that we agree on the interpretation of every scripture to enjoy mutually productive Christian labor and fellowship.

Confrontation Phobia—

Christians stereotypically avoid confrontation like the plague, but we (especially we who presume to feed Christ's lambs) are not permitted that luxury:

- > "Sound doctrine can reside only with those Christian leaders who will choose to endure regular and reciprocal confrontation and challenge. Iron sharpens iron, you know (Proverbs 27:17). In governmental environments those are called checks and balances." —T. C. Newsome

We must accept, by faith, only that Jesus is God, born of the virgin Mary, that he arose from the dead and sits at the right hand of the Father, ever making intercession for us, etc. No amount of "interpreting" can change that. No one else's opinion about it can change it. For most everything else in God's written word, though, we must join together and study to learn HOW to rightly divide the scriptures and show ourselves approved as workmen who have no need for shame. The skin thickens, with time. [See Matthew 15:12-14, 23:13-15 and Luke 6:39.] Set before every presumed feeder of Christ's lambs, today, are blessings and a curses. [See Deuteronomy 11:26 and 27:18. For laymen, there is Jeremiah 17:5-8.]

If you are not a preacher it would be easy for you to think I intend the above for preachers. Actually, though, it is for **you**: In someone's eyes, you are a role model/leader. We laymen can no longer languish in the luxury and comfort of the pew and permit our preachers to do our critical thinking and growing for us; they won't. We must get onto the playing field ourselves. Spectators stay dry and clean...and in the bleachers. Players get sweaty and dirty. Players practice, practice, practice—hoping for a chance to get off the bench to play against a real opponent. Practicing is characterized as managed confrontation with other players on the same team. Once off the bench, they are more likely to have gained sufficient competence and confidence to perform effectively in confrontations against well-rehearsed enemy teams:

- > "...be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. **Put on the whole armour of God**, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore **take unto you the whole armour of God**, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and **having done all, to stand.**" —Paul, at Ephesians 6:10-13

Paul instructed the non-preacher believers at Ephesus and Thessalonica to put on **the whole armor of God**. This is the essence of his message to the believers in those two churches:

Put on...

- ① the Belt of **Truth**
- ② the Breastplate of **Righteousness**
- ③ the Shoes of **Practice** unto Readiness
- ④ the Shield of **Faith**
- ⑤ the Helmet of **The Hope of Salvation** —1 Thessalonians 5:8
- ⑥ the Sword of the **Spirit**, which is the Word of God
- ⑦ the Wisdom of **Alertness**

That prompts some really important questions. Here are three of them:





1. Recall the story of David and Goliath? David refused King Saul's battle armor because it was heavy...and really awkward, too. That was because David hadn't **practiced** fighting while wearing it, as had Saul. Battle armor (even God's whole armor) would be too awkward and heavy for anyone who hadn't, first, become intimately familiar and comfortable with its collective weight and *feel* in **Practice**.
2. How effective might one be in real conflict if one's **SHOES of Practice Unto Readiness** were clean, having never been worn in rigorous Practice? Have you ever worn shoes that hadn't been broken-in?
3. How effective might one be with a SWORD if one has never used it in regular and strenuous combat Practice exercises? How might one even effectively practice with it if one's knowledge of it is both passive and limited to what someone else has told one about it?

Unfortunately, it is not "practice" that makes perfect. Only "perfect practice" makes perfect. Roleplays in your church's "what 'we' believe" seminars and workshops are justly characterized as imperfect practice. For perfect practice you will want to align with a few other believers who will resolve to separate denominational dogma from original truth. Then and only then can you enjoy "perfect practice." Your **Shoes of Practice Unto Readiness** will get broken-in and really dirty, too – with regular exercises of **managed conflict** within your very special group. You will each grow in skill, spiritual muscle for bearing the weight of God's combat armor and in stamina—for *enduring to the end*.

If you've put on Christ's yoke, you must push against it, too. Without teamwork there is no work. Not only must we each be receptive to reciprocal instruction, correction and reproof (even occasional rebuke), but **we must actively cultivate such environments and relationships**. Otherwise we can gain no skill. Without skill there can be no perfect practice. Without perfect practice there can be no readiness. Without readiness soldiers in the army of the Lord grow lethargic and weak: The weight of God's armor causes weak soldiers to collapse even before any real combat begins. Even if those soldiers make it into combat, if their armor still feels awkward from lack of perfect Practice, they'll be quickly and easily defeated. It's easy to sing about being in the army of the Lord, but who will practice to learn how to fight effectively in the ranks of the real army of the Lord? You?

> "So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." —Jesus, at Luke 14:33

We soldiers in God's army cannot afford to avoid conflict like the plague. If, like the proverbial old couple that claims to have never argued, we were to always avoid confrontation, none of us would be able to fulfill the mission of the church. Now, you may currently think that the assignment Jesus gave to the church was to get as many people "saved" as possible. That mindset is enormously popular, I know, but it couldn't be further from the truth. The Great Commission of Matthew 28:19,20 is about making DISCIPLES:

- (1) Preach.
- (2) Make Disciples of those who Believe.
- (3) Teach/Encourage each new Disciple to do the same.

There are BIG differences between Believers and Disciples. Believers can't fulfill The Great Commission. Disciples can. The visible church has made millions of Believers, but who's making Disciples? Can that be done from a pulpit? No one can "teach" a young child how to ride a bike. Kids learn how to ride bikes from patient COACHES. Shepherds can't produce sheep. Sheep produce sheep. Nobody can "make Disciples" from a pulpit. The making of Disciples is a "coaching" assignment to us all. Disciples are made one-at-a-time, by other Disciples, and that takes time. But where are the Coaches? You? If not, then you may want to gather a group of friends for regular Discipleship **Practice**. Sound like a formidable assignment? There's help: Visit www.DYPK.org and then click on the "HOW TO STUDY" tab. Share that info with a few of your friends as a preface to organizing for regular Discipleship skills practice. I did that. It worked. Still working!

It is unfortunate, at least, that most churchgoers think they're Disciples because they Believe and are faithful in church attendance. Their pastors typically think they're fulfilling The Great Commission because they've filled their pews with Believers. But even devils believe (James 2:17-26). To become a Disciple a Believer must fulfill "The Great Commission." That means to become a Student of, an Adherent to and a Teacher of the doctrines of Christ.

Instruction, correction, reproof and occasional rebuke in The Church are reciprocal. Instruction, correction, reproof and occasional rebuke in the visible church are, observably, the exclusive domain of the clergy. In The Church, participants are actively involved in the process; not passively. The playing field is level. Each participant, aspiring to gain more knowledge and understanding and greater spiritual maturity recognizes and respects those others who may have advanced further than himself in the acquisition of either of those things. Their reciprocal interaction enables each one to...*be thoroughly furnished unto all good works* (2 Timothy 3:17) and to...*make full proof of...his...ministry* (2 Timothy 4:5).

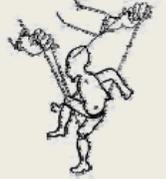


Preachers, please pay close attention: Neither can you advance in any of those critical disciplines unless you also submit yourself to reciprocal instruction, correction and reproof. Restricting that kind of collaborative interaction to your professional peer group and to organizationally superior clerics will stunt your growth...and theirs. That may sound like an unreasonable requisite for membership in The Church, I know. It will, in fact, be an impossible task for you...unless you will come to understand, first, that we laymen are not your subordinates. Many of us would readily interact with you as peers, to our mutual benefit, if you would be proactive in cultivating the **collaborative** environments and the relationships that encourage it. Or, you can choose to leave the driving to us...

Yes, there are some core doctrines and principles and some critical truths on which we must agree in order to enjoy effective Christian labor and fellowship. Beyond those, though, I personally hope the **Bible Explorers Club**, LLC, will never develop a "what 'we' believe" mindset. Why? Because my beliefs need to be challenged regularly. Yours do, too. Collectively, our spiritual growth would otherwise be stunted and we would become like the visible church—masters of marionettes.

"Must we agree?" We must not always agree—but there are qualifiers.

—Scribe *pro tem*, an informed layman



"A wonderful blessing of *informed* Christianity is the easy destruction of profoundly popular doctrines by beautiful Bible facts." —T. C. Newsome

