

Unity

Cashmere Church of Christ

Introspection

How do you know?

If you are wrong about a biblical concept, is that sin?

If you have a “false view” about a biblical subject, does that make you a “false teacher”?

Is it possible for you to always know the correct interpretation of scripture?

If your brother is wrong about a biblical concept, does he sin?

If your brother has a “false view” about a biblical subject, does that make him a “false teacher”?

Is it possible for your brother to always know the correct interpretation of scripture?

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1. Sin is not when you are wrong about something, sin occurs when you are in violation of God's Law.
2. Individually, or as a group, we can be wrong on any given subject. Ultimately, there is only God's Truth. We must seek His perspective on every issue.
 1. Love the Lord your God with all your mind... Seeking Him with all your intellect.
3. Everyone is not going to have the same knowledge on every issue. That doesn't mean there is not a correct interpretation to every issue; it just means I can't always possess it on every conceivable biblical matter. To claim otherwise would mean that I am claiming to be omniscient.

God's Perspective

What would you accept as evidence?

How about the Apostles teaching...? I Corinthians 8:1-13

*Paul begins by establishing the **truth** that there is nothing wrong with eating meats sacrificed to idols... (v4) That there are some who lack this knowledge... (v7) But, given certain circumstances, someone with this knowledge could destroy the faith of another brother... (v11)*

- ***Did that mean that all of those who thought it was wrong to eat these meats now had to agree with Paul before they could have unity?***
- ***Did they have to repent of holding to a “false” view before they could be considered faithful Christians?***
- ***Did it mean that division was inevitable if everyone didn't agree?***

3

Evidence? How about “Teaching directly from an Apostle”? Acts 2:42 (And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles teaching...)

Let me demonstrate this biblical concept. During the first century one of the great controversies among some Christians center around the eating of meats that had been sacrificed to idols.

Some believed it was wrong to buy and eat meats if the meat had been sacrificed to a pagan god. Others believed there was nothing wrong with eating meats sacrificed to idols.

What was the right answer?

Observations

Learning from the Apostles' Teaching

Everyone is not going to have the same knowledge on every issue. That doesn't mean that there is not a correct interpretation; but rather that I won't always possess that knowledge.

In order to be a faithful Christian, you don't have to be right about everything. That doesn't mean that we shouldn't strive for "perfection" (Phil. 3:12-21). However, perfect knowledge and perfect application of that knowledge are logically required of those claiming to be right about everything (i.e. omniscient).

Many believed that eating meats sacrificed to idols was a sin. Instead of forcing them to agree with the truth, Paul said to let it go for the sake of unity and love. Being wrong is not the same thing as being in sin. Paul advised that it is OK to be divided on this issue; yet to be cautious of a much greater issue.

Observations (2)

Learning from the Apostles' Teaching

On the topic of unity... Paul had earlier told the Corinthians that there were to be no divisions among them.

"I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to agree together, to end your divisions, and to be united by the same mind and purpose." 1 Corinthians 1:10

Yet, here Paul is telling them that it is OK to be divided on this issue. Why?

1:13 – "Is Christ divided?"

2:2 – "For I decided to be concerned about nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."

15:1-4 – "Now I want to make clear for you, ..., the gospel that I preached to you, that you received and on which you stand,..."

Paul was speaking about our unity in Jesus Christ as our Savior. He was referencing our identity in Christ. We are to be unified under the banner of Jesus Christ focusing in unity upon His gospel.

Paul was speaking about our unity in Jesus Christ as our Savior. He was referencing our identity in Christ. We are to be unified under the banner of Jesus Christ as our Savior King.

Observations (3)

Learning from the Apostles' Teaching

Paul admonished those “who have the knowledge” about God’s perspective to instead ensure that they do not, even inadvertently, cause their brethren “who do not have this knowledge” to violate the mandates of their conscience. (v. 9-13)

Is this a “fair” conclusion...?

How does this teaching inform us in our responses to contemporary issues...?

Reasonable accomodation

Practices of the Early Church

A foundational pattern. Acts 2:40-47

“They were devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Reverential awe came over everyone, and many wonders and miraculous signs came about by the apostles.” (DISCIPLESHIP, WORSHIP)

“All who believed were together and held everything in common, and they began selling their property and possessions and distributing the proceeds to everyone, as anyone had need.” (SERVICE, MINISTRY)

“Every day they continued to gather together by common consent in the temple courts, breaking bread from house to house, sharing their food with glad and humble hearts, praising God and having the good will of all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number every day those who were being saved.” (COMMUNION, WORSHIP, EVANGELISM)

What would Jesus do?

Be imitators of me, Just as I also imitate Christ. (Paul)

How do you project and protect the Unity of the church?

"You have purified your souls by obeying the truth in order to show sincere mutual love. So love one another earnestly from a pure heart. You have been born anew, not from perishable but from imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God." 1 Peter 1:22-23

How do you support the Fellowship of the church?

"Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ so that – whether I come and see you or whether I remain absent – I should hear that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind, by contending side by side for the faith of the gospel, and by not being intimidated in any way by your opponents." Philippians 1:27

How do you serve the Ministry of the church?

"...Instead of being motivated by selfish ambition or vanity, each of you should, in humility, be moved to treat one another as more important than yourself. Each of you should be concerned not only about your own interests, but about the interests of others as well. You should have the same attitude toward one another that Christ Jesus had..." Philippians 2:1-11

How do you share the Responsibility of the church?

"Receive one another, then, just as Christ also received you, to God's glory..." Romans 15:7-13

How do you project and protect the Unity of the church?

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