

How to Address Controversy

- Introduction:
1. Jesus was a controversialist, not shying away from disagreement.
 2. In this regard, the church has and should follow in his footsteps.
 3. Our culture needs a moral voice to help them discern between truth and error. If we are not that voice, who will be?
 6. The following are elements of a healthy, productive controversy.

I. Acknowledge That Truth is Knowable and Agree on a Standard.

- A. (John 8:32; Ephesians 5:17).
- B. If you don't have a common standard, you're wasting your time.
- C. Not all Bible study is profitable (Matthew 7:6; Matthew 10:14).

II. Make Sure Your Aim is to Teach/Convert, Not to Win an Argument

- A. This is not about pitting wits against another.
- B. Sometimes people use weak arguments to arrive at the right conclusion.
- C. Lose the zingers and memes that only polarize.
- D. For this very reason, debates have fallen on hard times, but they are one of the best ways to learn the truth if conducted properly.

III. Speak the Truth in Love

- A. (Ephesians 4:15; Colossians 4:6).
- C. (Proverbs 15:1).
- D. Ridicule and sarcasm are rarely effective tools in changing one's mind.

IV. Accurately Represent the Other Person's Position

- A. (Proverbs 18:17).
- B. It is unethical to build a "straw man" of a person's position, then destroy it.
- C. Ills. From book entitled, "The Truth About the Church of Christ."
 1. We believe salvation by works rather than by the grace of God.
 2. We believe in baptismal regeneration.
 3. We believe one cannot know we are saved.
 4. We believe that the name of our church is the one and only Bible name.
- D. Such misrepresentations close minds and cause people to doubt another's honesty and integrity.

V. Assume the Best

- A. (Matthew 7:12).
- B. Allow for good intentions.
- C. While there are some who teach lies in hypocrisy (1 Timothy 4:2), others are in darkness, groping for the truth (Acts 17:27).

VI. Don't Impose the Implications of One's Doctrine Upon His Belief System

- A. Implications are a great way to show the absurdity of a position.
- B. Example -- If there is no resurrection, why do we stand in jeopardy every day? (1 Cor. 15:30).
- C. Show the implication of one's argument, but don't assume one embraces that implication -- he may have just never made the connection.

- Conclusion:
1. If we follow these principles when we study with others, and among ourselves, we will set the stage for a productive study.
 2. Let's make sure we don't get in the way of the truth we are upholding.