

Controversy

Controversy exists because God's truth exists in a world of lies.

We should not seek to escape controversy. When light shines in darkness, controversy is inevitable.

For those of us who are in Christ, the truth has set us free, and we are, thus, called to discern truth from error and truth from half-truth.

We are aided by the Holy Spirit to distinguish light from darkness as we walk in the light of His Word.

There is one instance where standing for the truth is more difficult than standing for the truth in the world: *when we try to discern truth from error in the church of Christ.*

And if that isn't hard enough, when we believe that we have discerned truth from error in the church, how do we go about exposing the error and proclaiming the truth within the body of Christ?

So then, how do we contend for the one, true faith—for purity— while striving for peace and unity in the church?

These two commands seem exclusive, however, God's call to contend for purity and God's call to strive for peace and unity are fundamentally intertwined; *they complement each other.*

Peace and unity exist in the church, because of the truth, because of purity.

We earnestly contend for the purity of the one, true faith to preserve the authentic unity of the one, true bride of Christ for the glory of Christ.

-Unity at the expense of purity produces anarchy.

We cannot have true peace and unity without purity.

If we are complacent about all controversies, it probably means we are complacent about truth itself. On the other hand, if we fully engage in every apparent controversy that exists in the church, it could mean we are not asking ourselves the right questions to determine which controversies we should engage in and, what's more, we are not asking ourselves, "In what manner and to what degree should I engage?"

So, in what manner and to what degree should we engage in controversies in the church?

Let's begin by asking this question: *What will you profit if you win your argument and silence your foe, if at the same time you lose that humble, tender spirit which delights the Lord, and to which He makes the promise of his presence?*

We can blame the medium all we want, but the problem isn't the medium, it's us.

We are the problem — how we engage in controversy and how we utilize media, both old and new.

Here are ten questions you can ask yourself as you examine yourself before you enter into controversy. These will help you determine if, when, and how you should engage in controversy as you contend for the peace, purity, and unity of the church of Jesus Christ.

Have I prayed?

What is my motive?

Am I striving to edify others?

Have I sought counsel?

Would I rather not be wronged?

How will I treat the person with whom I disagree?

Am I involving a bigger audience than necessary?

Am I the right person to engage?

What is my ultimate goal?

Am I focused on God's glory?

(Questions from the article, "Consider Yourself" by Pastor Burk Parsons, Tabletalk Magazine, May, 2021.)