

Understanding Disagreements Within the Church... Biblically

Rich and Joe disagree with each other over a certain issue and it has become public knowledge to some extent. As a result, some people have begun to form up on sides over who is right and who is wrong and emotions are running high.

How should we respond this experience? The way you define a situation necessarily dictates your response to it. Should we first read some book? Should we immediately go see some counselor? Should we participate in some group discussion? Ps 46:10-47:1 10 Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. 11 The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah. KJV

Principle # 1: Identify the issue from a Biblical perspective.

- a. Every interpersonal issue should be **understood** from a Biblical perspective. Prov 3:5 5 Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding . KJV
- b. Pray asking God for wisdom and **discernment** to discover God's point of view; What is God doing?.
- c. Look to the Bible: Identify similar experiences from the **Biblical text** that approximately match the issue.
- d. If there is no similar experience, what **Biblical words** come to mind that might capture the essence of the situation? What Biblical principles might apply to this situation?

1 Cor 3:1-9 Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly — mere infants in Christ. 2 I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. 3 You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men? 4 For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not mere men? 5 What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe — as the Lord has assigned to each his task. 6 I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. 7 So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. 8 The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. 9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. NIV

- e. Beware of **inserting** yourself into someone else's disagreement because "What, after all, is Apollos?" (Joe)
 1. One who has a carnal nature who is commanded to **walk in the spirit** but who may not always do so. Gal 5:14-20 14 *For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* 15 *But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.* 16 *This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.* 17 *For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.* 18 *But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.* 19 *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, KJV*
 2. One who is being **sanctified** along with everyone else. Acts 20:32 And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. KJV
 3. One who is gifted by God for **specific** service Rom 12:1-4 *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.* 2 *And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.* 3 *For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.* 4 *For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: KJV*
 4. One who sees through a **glass darkly** 1 Cor 13:11-13 *When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.* 12 *For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part;*

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but then shall I know even as also I am known. 13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity. KJV

5. One who has been placed in the Body by the **Spirit of God** 1 Cor 12:18 18 *But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. NIV*
6. One who is under **authority**. 1 Sam 24:10 10 *Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the Lord had delivered thee to day into mine hand in the cave: and some bade me kill thee: but mine eye spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the Lord's anointed. KJV*
7. One who is kept by grace until the maturing work is **completely finished** 1 Thess 5:23-24 23 *And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it. KJV*
8. Bottom Line: A nobody who adds nothing in his flesh to the Glory of God a mere **servant** 1 Cor. 3:7 *So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything,*

Principle # 2: Assess your personal involvement: How should you respond?

1. **Search** the Scripture to see if what is being said comports with Scripture Acts 17:11 *11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. KJV*
2. Graciously allow for differences and allow teachers to be utterly **wrong** 1 Cor 3:12-15 *12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; 13 every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. 14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. 15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.*
3. Patiently allow the work of the Spirit which is bringing teachers/preachers to **fruitful** maturity John 15:2 *Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. KJV*
4. Avoid placing **absolute** confidence in any man: his thoughts, his opinions, his assertions, his confidence, his credentials, his reasoning, his arguments, his eloquence, even his calling Ps 118:8-9 *It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. 9 It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes. KJV Ps 147:10-11 10 His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse, nor his delight in the legs of a man; 11 the LORD delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love. NIV*
5. Avoid partiality except to Christ..abide in Him, trust Him and Him **alone** 2 Cor 4:5-6 *5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. NIV*

Principle # 3: Search For God's Point of View

1. Understand that the building up of the Church is God's field, God's building, **God makes it grow**
2. It is the sacred **dwelling** place of God 1 Cor 3:16-17 *Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? 17 If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are. KJV*
3. He will providentially **care for** what goes on in His Body (the Church) Eph 5:25-27 *even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. KJV*
4. He will **ultimately** assure that what happens in His body will lead to the glorification of Christ Rom 8:28-30 *28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. 29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. KJV*

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5. The Gates **of Hell** shall not prevail against His Church Matt 16:18 *18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. KJV*
6. In the final analysis, disagreement in the Church belongs **to God** and He knows how to accomplish His purposes in every heart, every soul and every mind of every believer. Trust Him.

Application

1. I must realize that God is doing the work of sanctification in those who are in opposition and my role is to **pray for them**. Jude 20-21 *20 But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. 21 Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. NIV*
2. Pray without ceasing that God's **point of view** will be recognized and embraced by all parties 2 Cor 10:3-5 *3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: 4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) 5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; KJV*
3. **Recognize** that Satan desires to sift all of us as wheat, plant tares among us, and ultimately to destroy the Church and each believer in it. Luke 22:31 *31 And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: KJV*
4. If you find yourself beginning to take sides or getting involved (emotionally or otherwise) be alert for and deal with your **own sin**... follow Christ John 21:21-22 *Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do ? 22 Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me. KJV*
5. Do not **own** an issue belonging to someone else Ps 15:1-3 *Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? 2 He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. 3 He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour. KJV*
6. Consider this: If this kind of issue could arise between Godly persons who love the Word of God and who are skillful in using it, could the same **happen to you**?

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For Example: 1 Cor 3:1-9 Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly — mere infants in Christ. 2 I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. 3 You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men? 4 For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not mere men?

5 What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe — as the Lord has assigned to each his task. 6 I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. 7 So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. 8 The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. 9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. NIV

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