

Name Calling or Calling Names

Many religious people in America do not know why they believe what they do.

Emotion and/or tradition - not scripture - has become their guide.

This explains

Is There a Difference?

*Some assume they are strong in argument only if they are violent in argument (Guy N Woods). Perhaps we have all shared in the distaste of a religious debate between people that lacks the Christ-like spirit. Issues and personality conflicts become "personal." Names are called; motives are judged; tempers flare; and people become polarized, being wary of anyone who fails to share their exact view on religious matters. Any wavering from the exact mold of views is seen as a "crisis" and damage control soon sweeps in. It is a great tragedy in that some fail to realize that even when truth is on their side – they do more harm than good – driving their listeners away from a relationship with the Savior. Shrill charges and appeals to prejudice NEVER profit the cause of Christ! Equally distressing is the fact that those who see damage being done are often fearful to speak out lest they be branded "doctrinally soft" and "compromising." While there may be some who are of a "doctrinally soft" mindset, **this is not always the case** when objecting to *the spirit* of a debate! The call for examination is universal. Each gospel preacher/teacher must be aware of how he comes across in his teaching. Contentiousness (*being inclined to argue; quarrelsome*) is condemned in scripture. Paul warned of some who have a *morbid interest in controversial**

*What about examining the doctrines of other religious people? Can we reason with others about the scriptures? As Paul and the apostles crisscrossed the first-century world we are told of them confounding the Jews in proving that Jesus is the Christ. See Acts 9:22; 17:2; 18:4; 19:9. Why can't we do this today in holding up the truth against religious error? There is scriptural precedent for exploring doctrines of men. For example, Elders have the command to *exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict.* (Titus 1:9) If they are expected to refute those who teach false doctrine, then it is necessary to understand what makes it false to begin with. Timothy was charged to *instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines* (1 Tim. 1:3). Paul strongly rejected the false doctrine of men bringing circumcision into the churches in Galatia. (Gal. 1:9) The Ephesians were exhorted to *not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but **instead even expose them*** (Eph. 5:11). We must not examine false doctrine to pump ourselves up while glorying in *how wrong everyone else is*. Remember we *speak the truth in love* (Eph. 4:15). Examinations are made for the defense of truth—**the doctrine of Christ. Honest bible teachers will not fear** an examination of their teaching. (Phil. 1:7)*

Should we name names of those who teach false doctrine? Why not? Don't they have a

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questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. (1 Tim. 6:4-5) All who defend the gospel need to be aware of pushing beyond a good biblical discussion into *seek & destroy mode*.

Of course, the other side of the picture is troubling as well. We live in an age of tolerance. The idea of *I'm OK, You're OK* has fully permeated religion in America. This has led to intellectual laziness! Why study & adorn oneself with the doctrine of Christ if it doesn't matter what one believes? **Many religious people in America do not know why they believe what they do.** Emotion and/or tradition - not scripture - has become their guide. This explains why we experience the high sensitivity of some when they hear teaching outside their comfort-zone. Because of this, some New Testament Christians move with fear. How can we teach truth without offending someone? Should we cease to specifically spell out erroneous denominational doctrines? What about naming names of those who teach false doctrine? Is there anything profitable in religious debate? These are good questions for us to consider.

WARNING: Feelings may be hurt; people may be offended by pure gospel preaching. While no one should set out to hurt someone's feelings when teaching the gospel, it will invariably happen at certain

responsibility to stand by what they teach? Teaching must be examined! See Acts 17:11. Romans 16:17 says that Christians should *keep their eye on (mark—ASV) those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned and turn away from them.* Take a look at the New Testament pattern. Jesus specifically named the Pharisees (Mt. 23); Paul named Hymaneus, Alexander, and Alexander the coppersmith (1 Tim. 1:19-20; 2 Tim. 4:14); John named Diotrophes (3 John 9-10). In Rev 2:14-15 the Christians at Pergamos were warned not to hold to the teachings of Balaam and the doctrines of the Nicolaitans — *which Jesus says He hates.*

How many Christians today owe their salvation to the person who had courage enough to specifically point out religious error in their life? There is little doubt that some took offense at first, but their heart was open enough to study and come to an understanding of the truth. Did you catch that? "Their heart was open..." That's what God desires—an open heart. Those who find themselves "worked up" in response to biblical teaching need to examine their heart. It is a sure sign of spiritual heart disease! Just because some may not be responsive or get their feelings hurt does not give Christians an excuse to be bashful in proclaiming the gospel. God forbid that we ever apologize for standing up for truth! Let us strive to find the healthy balance that exposes error in a tactful way.

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times with certain people. Those who preach the gospel are charged to *preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, **with great patience** and instruction.* (2 Tim. 4:2) It is not always a pleasant discovery for one to find that his religious practice is not in accordance with the doctrine of Christ. There is little doubt that Jesus offended the Pharisees & Scribes when He told them their worship was in vain because they *taught as doctrine the commandments of men.* (Matthew 15:8-9) Remember, they carried out their plot to kill Him. Do you think it possible that the Corinthians got their feelings hurt by Paul when he penned 1 Corinthians and strongly rebuked them for condoning a sinful sexual relationship going on between a man and his father's wife? In this case, hurt feelings turned out to be a good thing because it helped save a man from his sin. Read 2 Cor. 7:7-10. The Corinthians were *made sorrowful unto repentance.*