

# Why Do We Differ?

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It does not take a Solomon to determine that there are wide differences of views on some Bible matters among Christians today. The explanation is not satisfactory that says we are individuals and by nature must be different. The Holy Spirit demands that we be of the same mind and judgment; that we all speak the same thing religiously (1 Cor. 1:10). Jesus prayed that all his disciples be ONE, and explains that this oneness is to be the same as Christ and God are one. We are further taught to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). Why then do we differ? Why does one man say it does not make any difference whether one attends all worship services or not, and another insists that one must attend all such services? Why does one man insist that it makes no difference whether or not we believe in the verbal inspiration of the word of God, and another insists that it makes all the difference? Such differences that disturb us could be multiplied hundreds of times.

There are at least four reasons why we differ, none of them are justified in the word of God. If any two men are influenced solely by the word of God, nothing else, they will stand exactly together. But if some other influence enters with the Bible and affects one and not the other, that influence makes them differ.

1. **Ancestry** - The influence of parents and background is a powerful factor in determining the view one will ordinarily take toward the Bible. If parents and early training took a strict view of the word of God, most likely the person will have the same view. On the other hand, if parental training was liberal on some matters of the word, it is likely that the person will occupy the same position. Some denominational positions that were never completely destroyed in parents who left these denominations will be felt by the children and they will be more or less liberal in what the Bible says about them. This is one cause of different views on Bible matters. Diverse views are not justified on this basis and it does not follow that both views are right. We must determine that family background and training will not decide for us what God commands. Only a consistent understanding of all that the Bible teaches will produce unity of faith.
2. **Authority** - Deciding where the right authority is will eliminate differences of opinion on Bible matters. Some place tradition (common practice and teaching over a period of time) as the proper authority in determining what is right and what is wrong. Others look to men of reputation and experience as the proper authority to decide which view is right. Still others rely entirely upon their personal preference as the final authority in what is right and what is wrong. There is no authority in religious matters but Christ. He has all authority in the church (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:17-18; Matt. 28:18-20). Every question must be decided by his authority, and this will produce complete agreement between all who so respect his word.
3. **Associations** - "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. 15:33). We are greatly influenced by the company we keep. This is a powerful factor in helping one determine his views on certain questionable things. If one becomes intimately associated with a man who has a liberal view toward the word of God, in time he will also accept that view to some degree. The same is true with respect to the conservative view of God's word. Men have

been known to lose respect for the plain and pointed commands of God in the plan of salvation because they married a woman who did not respect these requirements. Associations will influence one's view toward matters plainly taught in the word of God, and this will cause differences between one who has not been so influenced by associations.

4. **Ambitions** - Many are not influenced by parent training, traditional authority or wrong association in studying the Bible, but their own ambitions will cause them to differ from their brethren on Bible doctrine. One may desire to justify himself in something and take a position on some subject that he would not take otherwise. Another is too interested in pleasing the general public and forms a view on some subject that differs from the one who is not interested in pleasing everybody. Another craves the recognition of his fellowman and uses a strange doctrine to accomplish that goal. He will differ from another who does not have that ambition.

What is the solution to this problem? How shall we approach the matter to bring unity among brethren? There is only one answer; there is absolutely no substitute. The only basis of agreement is the word of God. One says, "All accept this, but all do not see the Bible alike. How shall the problem be solved?"

It is true that many do not "see the Bible alike, or more correctly, many are not alike because they do not see the Bible. All who see (understand) the Bible see it alike. For example: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." One looks at this and says, "It means one must believe and be baptized before he can be saved." Another says, "No, it means one must believe but not necessarily be baptized to be saved. Why do they differ? It is not because the passage says one thing to one and something else to the other. Some or all of these factors mentioned are influencing one or the other. To understand in agreement, each must forget what his parents believed about it, discard all other authorities, leave the influence of associations out of it and bury all personal ambitions. He must then ask himself three questions: Whose authority is it? What does he say? Is it meant for me? And if he reasons that there is but ONE way, he will be in agreement with all others of like mind on the faith once delivered (Jude 1:3). Jesus prayed that we be one, as he and the Father are one, and that upon the basis of his word (John 17). If each person came to this passage in this manner complete agreement in faith and practice would result. Christ said it, therefore it is the proper authority. He said to believe and be baptized to be saved. The statement is simple and plain. It is meant for me because it involves "every creature." In every matter of faith this principle is the same. In matters of personal judgment: in matters where God has not spoken, each must be careful not to bind them as matters of faith and cause division among brethren. But let us be sure we are not confusing matters of faith with matters of opinion.

Why do we differ? It is not God's fault; it is not the fault of the Bible. The fault is with

those who are involved, and if we have the hope of going to heaven, "let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing" (Phil. 3:16).

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