

Decision Making in a Local Church (Part 2)
(Brethren Can Differ without Breaking Fellowship)
www.ncvchurch.com

Introduction: We should not be surprised when brethren disagree.

- A. True disciples are always thinking and growing. As we grow, we do see both our beliefs and opinions change. **(Eph 4:11-15)**
 - 1. God's word is true, and it never changes. **(Ps 19:7; Jude 3)**
 - 2. How can those of different backgrounds and maturity work together in a local church?
- B. Unity in the church is an ongoing struggle that requires wisdom. **(Eph 4:1-3)**
 - 1. If we are humble learners (disciples) and maintain the fruit of the Spirit, we can work through any problem. This requires long suffering and patience.
 - 2. We previously examined the need to make decisions. We now will look at the hard part, working with our brethren in practice.
 - 3. If we are honest, we should recognize the great struggle each of us will have to maintain a proper heart towards the truth and towards others. **(Col 2:2-5)**

I. The foundation of our fellowship with God is an obedient faith

- A. All Christians have the forgiveness and fellowship with God in common. **(Rom 6:3-5; 8:9)**
 - 1. This is where we all want to be! "If you miss heaven, you've missed it all!"
 - 2. An obedient faith cannot ever compromise with sin. **(Rom 6:1-2)**
- B. We must be true to our present level of understanding and seek to keep a good conscience!
 - 1. I vividly remember my growth as a new Christian! **(Rom 14:1-4; 22-23; 1 Tim 1:3-5)**
 - 2. There were things that I thought were right that I later learned were wrong, and things that I thought were wrong that were right!
 - 3. Humility, conviction, courage and a constant seeking and learning is the path God has before us! He has a standard that does not change. **(Phil 3:12-17)**
- C. How can we determine what is right and what is wrong? **(Heb 5:12-14)**
 - 1. We must learn how to handle scriptures and how to apply them.
 - 2. Often people conclude things are right or wrong not on the basis of facts and reason from the scripture, but on some other basis. **(Mt 22:29-30; 12:3, 5; 19:4)**
 - 3. This is the greatest challenge we face! Many in local churches do not know how to skillfully handle and apply scriptures. **(2 Tim 2:14-16)**
 - 4. As a new Christian I was surprised at the "reasoning" of some brethren. The easy way is to follow tradition or take the easiest path. Jesus wants us to "dig deep!"

II. We must take great care in our collective work together

- A. There are decisions made in a local church that involve everyone.
 - 1. When we spend the money taken on the first day of the week this is everyone's work. **(1 Cor 16:1-2; Phil 4:15-17)**
 - 2. When we worship, everyone is to take part! **(Col 3:16; 1 Cor 14:15-16)**
 - 3. When one believes a thing to be sinful in these areas, then they are left with no

- good choices if they remain. They must either *participate or commit sin!*
- B. There are decisions that take place that are matters of *personal opinion*. (Ex. Color of paint)
1. Here there is no sinful choice, just choices *based on judgment*. (**Rom 14:14**)
 2. If we are not careful, we can *see others hurt* because of either their own immaturity and/or a lack of love on our part. (**Col 3:14-15**)
 3. I must not bind *my opinions on others*.
 4. In these matters we must be “willing to yield” for *the good of others*. (**Jas 3:17**)
- C. There are decisions that one may believe are wrong, but he is allowed *not* to become a participant.
1. Should we have the Lord’s supper on Sunday night? Each individual can decide if they want to participate or not. My action *does not bind other brethren!*
 2. Should we use an instrument of music? ... women preachers? *All* are involved.
- D. The men that address the assembly must be *true to God’s word*. (**2 Cor 11:3-4; 2 Jn 9**)
1. There is also *room to disagree* with what is taught from the pulpit! (**Acts 17:11**)
 2. There is *a path to handle differences* without a break of fellowship. A speaker gladly recognizes this truth. Challenges are welcomed! (**Acts 18:26**)
 3. There should also be an expectation of things to be taught without compromise! We want *the whole council of God*. (**Acts 20:26-27**)
 4. We must also refuse to yield to those that put the approval of men *above fellowship with God!* Some want to put pressure on the speaker. (**2 Tim 4:2-4; Gal 5:11; 6:12**)
 5. *Longsuffering and wisdom* are needed here. (**Col 3:12-13**)
 - a. There will always be areas that require further study.
 - b. There are some things that *we cannot yield to*. (**2 Jn 9-11; 1 Tim 1:3**)
- E. How does a local church practice *church discipline*? (**1 Cor 5**)
1. Without elders, this is one of the most difficult areas for a business meeting to decide.
 2. We will be sorely disappointed when we expect all in the meeting to have the same understanding and maturity.

III. We must avoid those things that unnecessarily provoke our brethren

- A. Use your *words carefully!* (**Eph 4:29; Col 4:5-6**)
1. There is considerable pressure on spiritual men who are teaching.
 2. A single mistake can have *huge consequences*. (Ex. Factory that burned a few years ago.) (**Jas 3:5**)
 3. We can “demand” others line up with what *appears to be a threat*.
- B. We must always *guard our hearts*. (**Prov 4:23**)
1. We need to distinguish between *emotion and principle*. We may in our emotions show an unbalanced emphasis.
 2. In bitterness the real problem will be untouched. (**Mk 15:9-11**)
 3. A *rash decision* can cause much damage to the Lord’s cause. (**James 3:17-18**)

Conclusion: Let each of us patiently work for the Lord.