

The Harvester



Preparing Souls To Serve The Lord



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Church Controversies

By Wayne Jackson

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One of the saddest situations that a spiritual person can contemplate is a brotherhood engaged in a "non-civil war," particularly in a time when it ought to be united against the growing forces of evil that threaten the stability of society and the welfare of our families. The grim reality is, however, it always will be the case that "little people" make "big issues" of "non-issues."

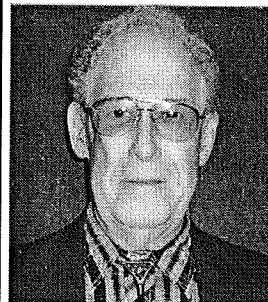
There likely is not a church of any size that has not had internal problems of one sort or another on occasion. It was true in the first century (Acts 6:1-6; 1 Corinthians 1:10-17), and remains so today. This is because churches are made up of a diverse variety of people. We teach the gospel and hope to make converts that we can help complete their journey to heaven. Each soul, though, brings his or her own personality and conglomerate of problems into the family of God.

Some people are honest, pliable, and easy to gradually mold into mature Christians. Others bring a truckload of problems with them. Some are perpetually childish, supersensitive, grumpy, and/or constantly on the prowl for a fight. The contentious, like the poor, will be with us always (Mark 14:7). The key issue is: when and how do we deal with them?

There is no simple, universal solution. Frequently the chronic complainers simply must be ignored—unless they are disruptive to the church as a whole. Usually this sort of person eventually establishes himself as an individual of non-influence. He drowns in his own sourness.

Others may exert considerable unsettling influence, and need to be addressed in a more forceful fashion—perhaps even to the point of suspending fellowship. Those who are perpetually factious and disruptive must not be allowed to damage the peaceful environment of the local family (Romans 16:17; Titus 3:10).

Internal personal problems ought to be dealt with within the local family, and should not be broadcast throughout the brotherhood. One scarcely can imagine the sort of chaos that would reign if every local controversy were to be elevated to a nation-wide scale, and pontifications were issued across



Charles & Barbara Paulin Honored At Booster Banquet

Brother Paulin was baptized into Christ in the early 1960's and has been a member of the South Florida Avenue church of Christ ever since. He and Barbara, have been married since January 6, 1961, and they have three children and four grandchildren. Charles worked for Publix Supermarkets almost forty years, mostly as a truck driver. According to the records, he never missed a day of work due to illness, and he was never involved in a vehicle accident. The Paulins have consistently contributed to the school over the years, and often coordinated these contributions with Publix Charities' matching funds. Their influence has also extended to their family, as they also contribute time and funds to the school. We appreciate the Paulins and their family. We thank God and pray His continued blessings on them.



Charles and Barbara

the worldwide family of God that if a church, eldership, or preacher does not fall in line with a certain clique in a distant city, state, or country, they must be disfellowshipped! How insane is that?

Some Guiding Principles

1 Local church controversies are much too complex for outsiders to know all the relevant facts. Long-distance analyses, therefore, likely are to be highly subjective and significantly inaccurate. Even though documents are widely circulated, they may have been composed in a climate of considerable bias and be subject to diverse interpretations. Some of our people are masters at taking words and phrases and twisting them to form an indictment alien to the meaning intended by the original author or authors.

2 Outside evaluations cannot take into account the personalities, motives, and attitudes of the principals who have been involved.


3 Some situations pertain to areas of opinion and the exercise of judgment, and long-distant critics are incapable of handing down dictums to be bound upon other churches—not to mention the absurdity of demanding such.

4 It is the epitome of presumption to suggest that a small mob of Christians scattered around the country can issue ultimatums to which all churches are expected to yield. Just because a few misdirected, lathered-up radicals threaten to impose disfellowship, does not mean that faithful people need to melt at the intemperate wrath of the misguided.

5 What about the issue of credibility? Many of those who seek to

fan the flames of local church problems are rabble rousers who themselves have been embroiled in serious controversies and inconsistencies, and generally have had past (or present) local problems that are quite as crucial as those they criticize. Their “dirty laundry” has never been acknowledged, nor has remedy been sought; yet they have set themselves up as monitors of the nationwide church. These self-deputized posses are constantly caught up in the frenzy of a new fight. Misguided zealots thrive on self-generated adrenalin.

Sometimes there are nation-wide conflicts that need to be engaged (e.g., changing the nature of worship or altering the elements of the plan of salvation), but many “fights” are not of this nature and should be left alone.

Jesus pronounced a blessing upon the peacemakers, not upon the strife-causers. 

Some Reflections on the Interrogation of Jesus

By Jackie M. Stearsman


Have you ever considered the response made by our Lord as He stood before Pilate and Herod? The following passages are cited from the American Standard Version, 1901.

And when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing. ¹³Then saith Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee? ¹⁴And he gave him no answer, not even to one word: insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly. (Mt. 27:12-14)

And Pilate again asked him, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they accuse thee of. ⁵But Jesus no more answered anything; insomuch that Pilate marvelled. (Mk. 15:4-5)

Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was of a long time desirous to see him, because he had heard concerning him; and he hoped to see some miracle done by him. ⁹And he questioned him in many words; but he answered him nothing. ¹⁰And the chief priests and the scribes stood, vehemently accusing him. ¹¹And Herod with his soldiers set him at nought, and mocked him, and arraying him in gorgeous apparel sent him back to Pilate. (Lk. 23:8-11)

Many years later the apostle Peter in reflecting upon this would write: “who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously” (1 Pet. 2:23).

Have you ever wondered why Jesus did not answer Pilate? Was Jesus ready to give an answer to everyone who asked Him a reason for the hope within Him (1 Pet. 3:15)? Do you think some might label Jesus a sinner because He did not answer every question posed to Him? Did Solomon express wisdom when he said there was “a time to keep silent, and a time to speak” (Eccl. 3:7)? Did James provide any insight in the proper motivation and use of the tongue (Jas. 3:1-18)? 

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(863) 683-4043

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Jason Roberts



Ryan Roark



Miles Peeples



Frank Parker



Jeffrey McNeal



Christopher Love

MONDAY

9:00 God's Interest In Reconciliation
9:40 Man Needs To Be Restored
10:20 BREAK
10:50 The Price Paid To Reconcile Man
11:30 LUNCH

Forum: Identifying The Lost

1:30 Individuals May Be Lost
2:00 Families May Be Lost
2:30 Congregations May Be Lost
3:00 BREAK
3:30 Questions And Answers On Forum Topic
4:30 DINNER
6:30 Congregational Singing
7:00 What We Learn From Luke 15
7:45 Problems/Solutions In Differences

Jeffrey McNeal
George F. Beals

Jason Roberts

Larry Calendine
Ryan Tuten
Michael Dockery

Christopher Lowe
Jackie M. Stearsman

TUESDAY

9:00 David's Attitude Of Restoration
9:40 True Spirituality In Restoring The Lost
10:20 BREAK
10:50 Restoring Our Attitude On Finances (1)
11:30 LUNCH

Forum: Identifying Peacemakers

1:30 Insight From The Beatitudes
2:00 Insight From The Fruit of the Spirit
2:30 Insight From The Christian Graces
3:00 BREAK
3:30 Questions And Answers On Forum Topic
4:30 DINNER
6:30 Congregational Singing
7:00 Paul's Concern For His Own People
7:45 Insight From Lamentations

Melvin Sapp
James Colwell

David Stearsman
Melvin Sapp
Gene Burgett

Will Vann
Jimmy Clark

WEDNESDAY

9:00 Difficulty Of Pharisaical Characteristics
9:40 Congregations Can Be Restored
10:20 BREAK
10:50 Restoring Our Attitude On Finances (2)
11:30 LUNCH

Forum: Identifying Methodology

1:30 Importance Of Personal Contact
2:00 Essentiality Of Genuine Concern
2:30 All The Lost Are Not The Same
3:00 BREAK
3:30 Questions And Answers On Forum Topic
4:30 DINNER
6:30 Congregational Singing
7:00 All Members May Not Be Receptive
7:45 Personal Accountability

Freddie Clayton
Jimmy Clark

Don Hudson
Frank Parker
Brian R. Kenyon

Bernard Cooper
Bill Greer

THURSDAY

9:00 Gentleness And Peacemaking
9:40 Wisdom From Above In Restoration
10:20 BREAK
10:50 Restoring Our Attitude On Finances (3)
11:30 LUNCH

Forum: Identifying Differences

1:30 Be Sure We Know All the Facts
2:00 Be Sure We Do Not Act Hastily
2:30 Withdrawing Fellowship As Last Step
3:00 BREAK
3:30 Questions And Answers On Forum Topic
4:30 DINNER
6:30 Congregational Singing
7:00 Mercy Extended, Mercy Received
7:45 Forgiveness Is Not Easy

Miles Peeples
Earl Edwards

Bill Greer
Freddie Clayton
Earl Edwards

Ryan Roark
Tom Holland

"Do You Understand Restoring the Erring?" is a very relevant and much needed topic for the church and world today! This lectureship will study who really is in error from a Biblical standpoint, why all of us should care, and how can we best reach the erring while keeping "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). January is a great time of year to be in Lakeland, Florida, and there will be no better place at that time for a study of restoring the erring. Come be with us!

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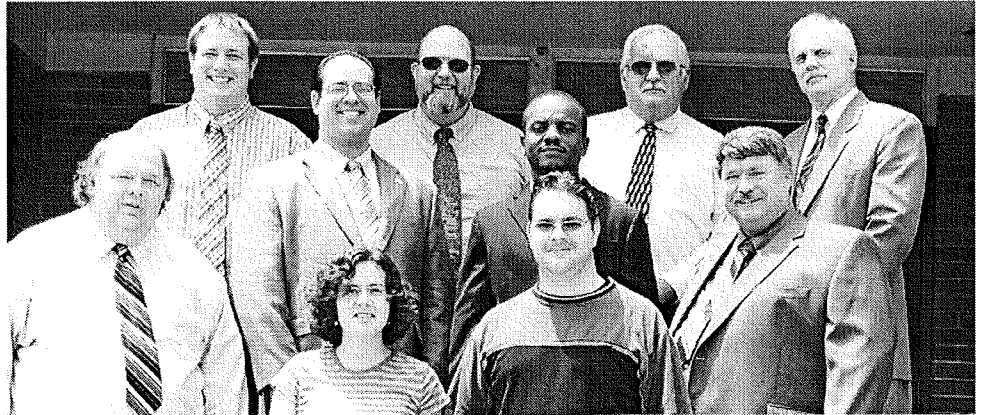
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*Our final deposit for the month is usually made on the last Wednesday of the month. All contributions received after that time are reported on the next month's financial statement.

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