

**Schedule of Meeting Times:**

WKAC 1080 AM Sunday 7:30 AM

*Speaker, Robert Emerson*

Study Sunday 10:00 AM

Worship Sunday 11:00 AM

Worship Sunday 5:00 PM

*Singing every 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday evening*

Study Wednesday 7:00 PM

**Preacher / bulletin editor:** Kris Vilander**Phone:** (256) 472-1065; (256) 472-1042**E-mail:** kris@haysmillchurchofchrist.org**Website:** www.haysmillchurchofchrist.orgCome study  
with us!**Servants during April:****Songleader:** Larry (1), David (8),  
Chandler (15), Dwight (22), Stanley  
(29)**Reading:** Chandler**Announcements:** Larry**Communion:** Stanley, Marty, David,  
Lakin**Wednesday Lesson:** Stanley (4), Kris  
(11), Mike (18), Larry (25)**Hays Mill church of Christ**

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# The Bible . Examiner

*"Examine everything carefully..." – 1 Thessalonians 5:21 NASB*

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*By Al Diestelkamp*

There is little doubt that one of Satan's tactics, in his effort to "kill and destroy" (Jn. 10:10), is to divide and conquer. He knows that if he can get Christians to "bite and devour one another" (Gal. 5:15) that he will not only win the parties involved, but will also turn others away from Christ.

Satan doesn't care whether the division among Christians arises from personal disputes, cultural differences, or doctrinal issues. He's willing to use any and all avenues of driving wedges and splintering the body of Christ, one congregation at a time.

Knowing this to be one of Satan's devices should motivate

Christians to foil his plan by being determined to "be of one mind" (2 Cor. 13:11). Of course, in order to do this we must have "compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous" (1 Pet. 3:8).

Diverse personality traits will sometimes provoke disputes among brethren. When that happens we need to remember that we are commanded to "pursue peace with all men" (Heb. 12:14). That means work at it! Otherwise, it is bound to result in bitterness, which will "cause trouble, and by this many become defiled" (Heb. 12:15).

The handling of doctrinal differences is another area in which we need to work hard in order to maintain, if at all possible, peace among our brethren. There is no doubt that we must be willing to "contend earnestly for the faith" (Jude 3), but we can do that without being contentious. Our defense of the truth must be accompanied by a sincere desire to "keep the unity

of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3).

Please do not interpret what I am saying to mean that we should compromise truth in order to maintain unity. The "divide and conquer" technique is not Satan's only device. He will happily abandon that approach if he sees that we are vulnerable to his "peace at any price" appeal. We must be watchful that men do not creep in with teachings and practices that involve us in error. Also, I need to make it clear that I am not suggesting that when brethren disagree that both are right, and for that reason, discussion and study on the issue(s) should not be avoided.

However, not every disagreement among brethren requires total agreement in order to maintain unity. Knowledge and understanding of God's word is a growth process, and we are not all at the same level. Who among us has not changed his convictions on some subjects over a period of years of study? If there be any who have never changed, I would suspect that somewhere along the way they stopped open-minded study of the Bible.

The same inspired apostle who pleaded with brethren to "all speak the same thing" and to, "be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10), in another letter acknowledged differing

levels of faith over "doubtful things" (Rom. 14:1). These commands are not contradictory. In the one, Paul is pleading for Christians to maintain unity by going to the same source of authority, and in the other, he is commanding forbearance in the application of that authority.

However, my brethren and I have difficulty determining which "issues" to place in the "doubtful things" category. Certainly, no strongly-held beliefs that I have belong there! But maybe they do. When brethren who have the same respect for the authority of the scriptures arrive at differing applications, it might fit into the category of "doubtful things."

Some suggest that only "matters of opinion," and not "convictions," belong in the "doubtful things" category. This may be a matter of semantics, but I make a distinction between opinion and conviction, and I don't take too kindly when anyone relegates my conviction down to the level of an opinion. However, I am not so dogmatic in some of my convictions that I refuse to consider my brother's differing conviction.


So, can brethren with different convictions work together? The answer depends on whether the differences result in causing one or the other to sin. There are some exceptions, but most of the issues wherein brethren disagree, do not

require a breaking of fellowship. History will confirm that most of the issues which have produced widespread division in congregations, if brethren had been considerate, could have been resolved in a way in which no one's conscience was violated.

Of course, there are a few issues in which divergent views may necessitate a break in fellowship within a local congregation. Some of the views regarding remarriage after divorce result in some insisting on accepting into fellowship persons that I believe to be adulterers. Since we are told "not to keep company with anyone named a brother who is sexually immoral" (1 Cor. 5:11), this would be a

situation which I could not continue in without violating my conscience. Fortunately, most controversies among brethren do not place us in that kind of situation.

In our battle against Satan's devices, let's not give him an advantage by needlessly splintering the body of Christ. None of us, in an effort to maintain unity, should claim that "Your convictions must conform to my convictions," but each of us should be sensitive to the convictions of others and diligently seeking a way to work together without any of us having to make the choice between violating one's conscience or breaking fellowship.

Via "Think on These Things," Oct-Nov-Dec 2005, Vol. 36, No. 4 

## Hear the gospel of Christ!

Invite your friends and neighbors to

our meeting May 13-16

with Kasey Harbin



### Family Notes

Suggestions for articles or sermons are welcome; please just let Kris Vialander know. Bulletins will also be archived on the website under "articles..."

### Sick or Hurting

Larry's daddy passed away early this morning (4/1); the visitation will be Tuesday night and the funeral on Wednesday at Limestone Chapel, although I don't have the exact times yet. Sister Polly Wise also passed away this week. Becky is doing well after her procedure, and Shane's father seems to be doing well after heart surgery. Pam was also sick this week.

Please pray for each of these, as well as those who are unable to meet with us...