

Schedule of Meeting Times:

WKAC 1080 AM Sunday 7:30 AM
 Study Sunday 10:00 AM
 Worship Sunday Morn 11:00 AM
 Worship Sunday Eve 5:00 PM
Singing every 2nd Sunday evening
 Study Wednesday 7:00 PM

Preacher / bulletin editor:

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“If your brother sins,
 go and show him his
 fault in private; if he
 listens to you, you
 have won your
 brother,”

—Matthew 18:15

**Servants during September:**

Songleader: Stanley (3), Larry
 (10), Stanley (17), Larry (24)

Reading: Stanley

Announcements: Larry

Table: Marty, Stanley, Larry,
 Mike M

Wednesday Lesson: Stanley (6), Kris (13), Larry
 (20), Stanley (27)

Lawn Mowing (week starting): Kris (3), Marty
 (10), Stanley (17), Larry (24)

Area Meetings: College View, PJ Anderson,
 9/23,24; **Singing River,** Stacy Crim, 9/24-29;
Eastside, Donnie Rader, 9/24-27; **O’Neal,**
 Lowell Sallee, 10/1-4

Hays Mill church of Christ

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The Bible . Examiner

“Examine everything carefully...” —1 Thessalonians 5:21 NASB

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Answering Criticism

by Heath Rogers

The Lord tells us that when we have a problem with a brother, we are to go to that person and talk with them about it, Mt 18:15-17. We can understand the wisdom behind this instruction. It is best for the sake of peace and unity to get things worked out as quickly as possible. And sitting down and talking with someone is the best way to get things worked out. This instruction is easy to understand, but sometimes we find it hard to obey.

In this article, we want to discuss how we should respond when we are the person that a brother is coming to. What do we do when the criticism and accusations are directed toward us? Consider the following points:

Watch Out For Pride

The Scriptures never use the word pride in a good sense. John tells us that pride is one of the avenues through which Satan tempts us, 1 Jn 2:16. It is hard not to take a confrontation from a brother as a

personal attack. Our pride is at stake, and our immediate reaction is to defend it. But if we do, we are opening the door for sin.

“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing,” Jas 1:2-4. Yes, our faith is going to be tested. And the sad fact is that sometimes our own brethren will be the ones who put us to the test. We would do well to exhibit patience when we are being confronted and challenged. According to James, patience under these circumstances is a sign of a perfect and complete Christian.

Are you sure you have to go on the defensive? Just ask yourself, “What is their demeanor? Are they sincere?” If they are, consider how hard this must be for them, listen to them patiently and be thoughtful in your reply.

Remember, "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger," Prov 15:1. Don't make a hard situation worse by thinking you have to defend your pride.

Never Misuse the Scriptures

We are Christians. We believe the Bible is our guide in all matters. So when we are being challenged, we naturally want to get our Bible out and defend ourselves. We need to be careful about approaching the Bible in this way. When we open our Bible and say, "Where is that verse? It has got to be in here somewhere," what have we done? We have gone to the Bible to find a verse that will justify ourselves, not to learn the truth! The Bible should not be used this way. The Scriptures were meant to equip us for every good work, not excuse us from questionable ones, 2 Tim 3:16,17. If our frame of mind is not set on a search for the truth, we had best just leave our Bible alone. The Word of God must be our guide, not an afterthought.

It Is Not Important That You Be Right, But That You Be Right With God

You shouldn't fall into the trap of trying to "win the argument." If the brother challenging you is sincere, and their concern is for your soul, you shouldn't be interested in "shooting down" their charges. If they are misunderstanding you, and a discussion causes them to change their mind, you haven't won an argument, you have "gained your brother," Mt 18:15.

This goes back to pride. Pride tells us that it is important to be right. If we are not careful it will cause us to try to justify ourselves and defeat their argument. We may even throw an attack back at them. We must think differently. What matters is that we are right with God. We need to be more like Paul. His desire was to live in all good conscience before God and men, Acts 23:1. When he found out that he was wrong about Jesus Christ, he changed. David teaches us a good lesson as well. When Nathan convicted him of his sin, he didn't try to defend himself, he simply confessed, "I have sinned against the Lord," 2 Sam 12:13. Honest and sincere people have been wrong before. Why would it be any different for you or me? Show a willingness to consider their point of view. Admit that you could be wrong. This is not a sign of weakness. It is an attitude that makes you easier to approach. Having a humble attitude goes a long way in helping situations like this. They are not going to be willing to reason with you if they can see that you are unwilling to reason with them.

We Need To Consider Our Brethren

Paul taught us that even when we are right, we must be willing to forgo our liberties to keep from offending a brother.

"Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way. I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of


itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died... It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak," Rom 14:13-15, 21.

"But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak... But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble," 1 Cor 8:9,12,13.

Let's say that Paul had done something that had offended a weak or conscientious brother. His immediate concern would not be to justify his action, but to mend the brother he had "offended," "wounded" or "grieved." Just because we have the right to do something

doesn't always mean that it is the right thing to do, especially if it is having an adverse effect on another Christian. "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others," Phil 2:3,4.

Conclusion

Talking to brethren when things aren't going right isn't always easy. The temptation is to just ignore the instructions found in Matthew 18:15-17. Unfortunately, many brethren have taken the easy out and now are at odds with their brethren. The Lord has told us to go, but He has also told us what to do when one comes to us. Resolving disagreements depends on how criticism is received as much as on how it is delivered. "Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another," Rom 14:19. 

Remember in Prayer

Mike's procedure on his liver was successful, but caused him to feel very unwell; he is some better now. **Cathy Mitchell** is also doing better, but her diagnosis indicates she will be dealing with this sickness for some time to come. It was difficult arranging the procedure in a way best

for **Alice and Stanley's grandson, Andrew**, but we are thankful that ultimately he had tubes successfully replaced in both ears. Please pray for all these, as well as **Betty; Carolyn; Dot; John, Sylvia, and Paige Pollard; Joyce; Deborah, and Serenity; Pam and Julie.** 