

The Church Faces Controversy
(A Study of Acts 6)
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Introduction: Every growing congregation will in time face controversy.

- A. This should be expected because of the various levels of knowledge and maturity within the members of a growing church. **(Eph 4:14-16)**
 - 1. The church at Corinth had cause for much controversy! Still as a church of God they were to patiently work on these problems. **(1 Cor 1:10)**
 - 2. When a church purposely avoids the open study of God's word, then we have ceased being followers of Christ.
- B. Controversy will reveal our hearts.
 - 1. By its very nature controversy has a measure of discomfort. How will one react in these circumstances? **(Jas 3:14-4:1)**
 - 2. Paul gave the Corinthian's credit for seeking the truth rather than trying to bury it and ignore it. **(1 Cor 7:1; 11:2)**
 - 3. How will you respond under pressure? Will you show the love of God or impatiently write-off brethren as "unreachable?"
 - 4. Some under the guise of spirituality run from proper controversy. The fear of discomfort leads them to run and hide.

I. Proper Controversy has Great Value (Acts 6:1-7)

- A. You will more clearly see what the Bible teaches in proper controversy.
 - 1. There are some issues that we hear over and over again, but often we never know them like we thought we did. Controversy often makes this point clear. (Ex. Training on teaching a home study.)
 - 2. The goal in these discussions is to first learn what God's will is and then determine the best way to implement it among brethren. **(1 Cor 4:6)**
- B. Issues are brought into the open rather than whispered among different groups.
 - 1. The church at Jerusalem had the beginnings of a serious problem. **(Acts 6:1)**
 - 2. "Complaint" - 1) a murmur, murmuring, muttering 1a) a secret debate 1b) a secret displeasure not openly avowed.
 - 3. These kind of voices in the background must be stopped! **(Phil 2:14; 1 Pt 4:9)**
 - 4. Controversy ended with a solution that "pleased the whole multitude." **(Acts 6:5)**
- C. Matters are settled so that the church can move forward with its work. **(Acts 6:7)**
 - 1. When issues are ignored there can be a constant drag on the spirit of a church.
 - 2. This is true even when it involves two individuals. **(Phil 4:2)**
 - 3. Leaving to go to another church should not be considered as a solution unless the church as whole has refused to work matters out! (Ex. A couple and divorce.)

II. Elements of Proper Controversy

- A. The issue is one that deals with the scriptures. **(1 Tim 1:3-4; 2 Tim 2:23)**
- B. Men of maturity and knowledge should take a leading role. **(Acts 6:2)**
 - 1. Dealing with these kind of problems takes a wisdom that experience brings.
 - 2. Here is where men lead and do not dictate!
- C. We should have confidence in brethren to do the right thing. **(2 Cor 2:3; 7:15-16)**

1. There are some who are cynics! Do not let their influence spread.
 2. It is hard to persuade one who has shown they have no respect for you.
 3. The apostles allowed the brethren to participate in the solution. **(Acts 6:3, 5)**
 4. When back room solutions are forced upon brethren there are serious problems.
- D. Make a distinction between what God requires and what are matters of judgment.
1. When God clearly has instructed a certain thing, then the issue is whether we will obey it or not. There can be no compromise. **(2 Cor 2:9)**
 2. If the issue is a matter of judgment that is there are several ways to do a matter and stay within what the Bible teaches, then we should be willing to yield.
 3. These problems are common among brethren. Please do not raise a matter of judgment to the level of “faithfulness.”
- E. We must have a humility to listen and be patient with brethren. **(Jas 3:17; Jas 5:7-9)**
1. Some force their views through false parallels and wrong judgements of motives!
 2. Some use peer pressure based upon their knowledge and spirituality as a basis. **(Jn 7:48-49)**
 3. We should be willing to give a matter time.
 4. What seems so clear to me may not at all be clear to others.
- F. We must not let fear drive our emotions and our actions. **(Jn 11:47-48)**
1. How many have quickly imagined scenarios that would require drastic action?
 2. In our fears we may cause open study to be cut off!
 3. Unreasonable time pressures and demands for immediate resolution will hinder discussion. **(3 Jn 10)**
 - a. How many would study with you if you open the study with: “If you do not agree with me on this matter, you are going to hell?”
 - b. When we become pushy it is likely that someone will push back!
 4. Fears of what others might think or may do will hinder discussion.
 - a. Some things greatly increase the pressure and hinder a reasoned solution. (Ex. There will be five families leave!)
 - b. “Brethren must be talking and plotting.” No, I need to trust my brethren.
- G. Do not afraid to admit you were wrong! **(Jas 5:16)**
1. Sometimes the best judgement with the sincerest of hearts can later be proven to be wrong.
 2. Let others know of your love for them and your openness to learn and change.
- H. Pray for wisdom. **(Jas 1:3-5)**
1. We should try to deal with most matters as individuals. When dealing with a large group discussion be aware of the limits and pitfalls of such an arrangement.
 2. We should not let congregational matters become brotherhood matters.

III. Reject those who want to “win at all costs.” (Acts 6:8-15)

A. The world has “no rules” and will do anything to win. **(Jas 3:14-15)**

B. Deal with the contentious spirit **(1 Tim 6:3-5)**

Conclusion: Our times of discomfort are often opportunities for growth.

A. Let us learn the patience that allows us to build up our brethren. **(1 Cor 13:4-7)**

B. This is where elders come from! Will we trust God or give in to fear?