

An Exercise To Discern Both Good and Evil (Hebrews 5:14)

It's About The Attitude

Scenario:

You are in an assembly of the congregation for the purpose of Bible study. This assembly is an open discussion. The discussion is about doing whatsoever the Lord has commanded (Matthew 28:20). The discussion is currently about rightly dividing the Lord's instructions based upon context, consistency, to whom they were written, etc. (II Timothy 2:14-18 and II Peter 3:15-18). Many members are offering up examples of instructions that apply today and some that do not.

Statement That Arises From Our Scenario:

A brother in Christ states: "I think we are focusing on the wrong things here. We cannot walk as Jesus walked. We cannot obey everything because we do not have Apostles today or Jesus today to keep us on track. I think we spend too much time on the do and do not. What we need to do is focus on our attitudes. Whether we get it right or wrong the Lord is more concerned about our attitudes than what we say and do. Attitudes are inner dispositions of the heart and thoughts — they are the hidden intentions which will eventually serve as the basis for our actions. 'For as he thinks in his heart, so is he' (Proverbs 23:7). If my attitude is right; I am right and my actions are right."

A Later Statement Is Made:

"Stop throwing verses at me. I have remained silent as I have sat through this false teaching here for years. I am done being silent. According to scripture, your attitude toward life, your circumstances, or toward other people should always be like the Lord's — as is defined by scripture. Good attitudes is what saves (Galatians 5:22-23). You are all disagreeing with me, but I used Scripture. I can go back to being silent or you can kick me out. My attitude is where it should be."

For Discussion: What do you see in those statements?

- Congregations have authority to assemble for open Scriptural discussions aside from the first day of the week assembly (**Acts 14:24-15:35**).
- In addition to **Matthew 28:20**, it is consistently true throughout both the Old and New Covenants that God wants His children to do as He has commanded (**Deuteronomy 5:1-10, Deuteronomy 5:33, Deuteronomy 10:12-15, Deuteronomy 30:1-20, Joshua 22:5, Psalms 119:1-6, Matthew 7:21-29, Matthew 12:46-50, Luke 6:46, Luke 11:28, John 14:15-24, John 15:10-14, Colossians 3:16-17, James 1:18-27, I John 5:1-3, and Revelation 22:14**).
- In addition to **II Timothy 2:14-18** and **II Peter 3:15-18**; it is also consistent that we must carefully handle the Scriptures and come to the right conclusions without changing what God has said (**Deuteronomy 4:2, Proverbs 30:5-6, Matthew 15:1-14, Galatians 1:6-9, I Thessalonians 5:21, and I Timothy 1:1-11**).

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- There are plenty of things recorded in the Scriptures that do not apply today. For example, the Law of Moses is intended to be a learning tool (**Romans 15:4**, **I Corinthians 10:1-13**, and **Hebrews 2:1-4:12**) and not a law for anyone to follow today (**Romans 7:1-6**, **Ephesians 2:11-17**, **Galatians 3:13-4:10**, **Colossians 2:4-17**, and **Hebrews 7:1-10:22**). Another example is how that Spiritual gifts, from the Holy Spirit through the laying on of the Apostles' hands (**Acts 8:4-24**, **Acts 19:1-7**, and **I Corinthians 12:3-11**) have ceased (**I Corinthians 12:28-13:13**).
- It is great to have brethren working together in the studying and discussion of the Scriptures (**Ephesians 4:15-16** and **I Thessalonians 5:11**).
- By stating this is a brother in Christ that means this is someone the local saints know has obeyed the Lord's will (**Mark 3:31-35**).
- To say that we cannot walk as Jesus walked, with the remainder of the context of his statements, is to teach blatant false doctrine (**Romans 8:29**, **I Corinthians 11:1**, **Ephesians 4:31-5:2**, **Ephesians 5:25**, **Philippians 2:3-9**, **Colossians 3:13**, **Hebrews 12:1-3**, **I Peter 2:21**, **I Peter 4:1-2**, **I John 1:6-7**, and **I John 2:3-6**).
- We don't need the Apostles to obey what has been revealed. Even when they were alive, their constant presence wasn't necessary (**Philippians 2:12** and **III John 1:1-4**). The written word of God is sufficient as our guide (**Matthew 4:4**, **Colossians 4:16**, **I Thessalonians 4:1-2**, **I Thessalonians 5:27**, **II Timothy 3:14-17**, **II Peter 1:1-11**, and **II Peter 3:1-2**). Even when all things were not revealed, what was revealed at those times was sufficient (**Deuteronomy 29:29**, **Psalms 19:1-11**, and **Romans 1:16-17**).
- Not sure what is meant by the "do and do not's". With this statement, I would want clarification before answering it.
- I am not sure where this definition of "attitude" came from. I would not get into an argument over a definition of a term that is not being used from the Scriptures either.
- The Lord is concerned about and will judge both what is said (**Matthew 12:33-37**) and what is done (**John 5:28-29** and **II Corinthians 5:10**).
- One's intentions [attitude by his definition] does not justify his or her actions either as this argumentation states, A person can be fully persuaded they are right while all along sinning against the Lord (**Matthew 7:21-23**, **John 16:1-3**, **Acts 26:1-20** [cf. **Acts 24:16**], and **Romans 10:1-3**).
- Hidden intentions do not always serve as one's basis for actions. One's intentions can be changed before they result in action (**James 1:13-16**).
- He is twisting **Proverbs 23:7**. If read in context, **Proverbs 23:1-7** is teaching that a person can set something before you in a way that appears hospitable, but their intentions can be impure (cf. **Psalms 28:3**, **Psalms 55:21**, **Psalms 141:4**, **Proverbs 26:23-28**, and **Jeremiah 9:8-9**).
- Why has this man sat in an assembly with things he is not in agreement with (**Amos 3:3**)? He cannot be permitted to just stick around and be quiet while he believes error is being taught (**I Corinthians 1:10**, **II Corinthians 6:14-7:1**, **Philippians 3:16**, and **Revelation 2:14-16**). Furthermore, didn't he say he was "done being silent". Then what? He wants to be silent again? What does a little leaven do (**Galatians 5:7-9**)?
- Then he twists **Galatians 5:22-23**. Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and faith are actions. They are not things in one's heart and thoughts that are hidden (his definition of attitude). For example, love for God and brethren is shown by action (**John 14:15** and **I John 3:14-18**). Joy is something

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- you do (**I Peter 1:8**). Peace is an action (**I Thessalonians 5:13**). Longsuffering is action (**II Timothy 3:10; 4:2**). Etc., etc., etc...
- One cannot be left alone after espousing error (**Romans 16:17-18, Galatians 5:7-9, I Timothy 1:19-20, and II Timothy 4:14-15**).
 - Using Scripture doesn't make one right (**Matthew 4:5-7, Matthew 19:1-12, and Matthew 22:23-33**). As was already stated in this scenario, Scriptures often get twisted and such ends in destruction (**II Peter 3:15-18**). Scriptures have to be handled aright (**II Timothy 2:14-18**).
 - His wording of "you can kick me out" is entirely ignorant. If he has been around the truth at all, for a while, he should know the congregation would have to withdraw from him if he is not right (**I Corinthians 5:1-13 and II Thessalonians 3:6**). The decision in such a case is not up to the congregation. Christ is the head of the church (**Colossians 1:12-18 and Ephesians 5:22**) and His word already makes that decision.
 - Nothing, including attitude, with this supposed brother is where it should be. He is not someone who is mistaken and just needs corrected (i.e. **Acts 18:24-28**). He is openly rejecting the truth and confessing that he has done so privately for some time. He is saying that his attitude (which by his definition means he has hidden thoughts that eventually results in actions) is right. He is not asking for help or questioning to learn. He is convinced that he is correct and the congregation is not. The Bible is clear that he cannot continue among the saints in such a state (**Ephesians 5:6-11**).
 - In the event one would consider some kind of thought that we can rewrite Ephesians 5:6-11 to have some kind of "he agrees not to teach it" error, consider how that did not excuse the erring congregation in Pergamos (**Revelation 2:14-16**).