

## Giving an Answer (I Peter 3:15)

### *Unity in Diversity*

#### Answer the following false positions:

“It is obvious that Christians sometimes <sup>1</sup>disagree about scriptural instruction, even in matters of considerable moral and doctrinal import. In spite of these disagreements, we work and worship together, leaving many matters of individual judgment in the hands of God. <sup>2</sup>That behavior is, I believe, the issue addressed in Romans 14” (Ed Harrell; Christianity Magazine; April 1989; page 6).

“Some of those who mistake conformity for unity appear to be startled when they first learn that <sup>3</sup>we suggest there may be unity-in-diversity. Actually we go much further than that. We assert that if there is any unity at all it must be unity in diversity” (Carl Ketcherside, “The Twisted Scriptures”; pages 71-72).

“The present frontier is the frontier of a grace-based fellowship with all our brothers and sisters in Christ. A truth began to dawn on us in the 1960’s and 70’s and increasingly through the 1980’s. <sup>4</sup>That truth is that God’s grace extends not only to our moral imperfections but also to our doctrinal short-comings” (Gary Person; Image Magazine; September / October 1993; page 32).

“The implications of all this to unity and fellowship are weighty. It means that the gospel itself, not our doctrinal interpretations, is the basis of our being one in Christ and in fellowship with each other. That is, when one believes in Jesus and obeys him in baptism, he is our brother and in the fellowship, this is oneness and this is unity. <sup>5</sup>That fellowship is strengthened and made joyful by doctrine, but it is the gospel and not doctrine that determines fellowship... <sup>6</sup>In doctrinal matters there can be and will be diversity of opinion and interpretation. It was so with the apostles themselves. But this is good, for we stretch each other’s minds and help each other to grow in knowledge in our mutual search for truth...” (Leroy Garrett; Restoration Review; pages 42-46).

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1. We cannot work and worship together when we disagree about scriptural instruction (**Romans 12:16, Romans 16:17-18, I Corinthians 1:10, II Corinthians 13:11, Philippians 1:27; 2:2; 3:16-17, Ephesians 5:11, II Thessalonians 3:6; 14-15, I John 1:3-7, and II John 9-11**). We need to be like Jeremiah (**Jeremiah 15:16-17**).

2. Read **Romans 14** and you will see that this chapter creates unity, not diversity (i.e. **Romans 14:1-3; 15:5-6**). We can simply agree to allow someone not to eat meats. However, as Paul later wrote, the person who teaches or forbids others from partaking in authorized liberties is then teaching / practicing a doctrine of demons (**I Timothy 4:1-5**).

3. “We” are not the authority to “suggest” anything (**Colossians 3:17; cf. Matthew 28:18-20**). They declare (not God) that unity must be in diversity. Is that what Jesus said (**Mark 3:24** and

**John 17:20-23)?** Unity and diversity are contrasting terms (**Amos 3:3** and **II Corinthians 6:14-18**).

4. Grace does not allow one to continue in sin (**Romans 6:1-2; 15-16**). Both moral imperfections and doctrinal ones are sinful (**I Corinthians 6:9-10** and **I Timothy 6:3-5**).

5. The Gospel is the doctrine [teaching] we are to obey and teach. They are one in the same (**II Timothy 3:16-17; 4:2, Titus 2:1**; and **II John 9**; cf. **II Thessalonians 1:8; 2:14**).

6. There cannot be differences of interpretation (**II Peter 1:20-21; 3:16-18**). The Apostles had one doctrine (**Acts 2:42**). When there was any disagreement, it had to be settled (**Acts 15** and **Galatians 2:11-17**). It is not good to have any disagreements as we are to be united in one faith (**Ephesians 4:1-6**; cf. **Jude 3**).