

ye have learned,” making it clear that the issue is sound doctrine. It is those who refuse to have their false doctrines judged who are causing the wrong kind of division, not those who “earnestly contend for the *faith*” (Jude 3), as we are admonished to do. Nor dare we compromise truth for the sake of avoiding controversy. J.I. Packer reminds us,

First, there is nothing unscriptural about controversy when the good of souls requires it, as it did in the controversies of (for instance) Christ and Paul, and when the good faith of one’s opponents is respected.

Second, the motive of those who make a virtue of avoiding controversy is likely to be nothing nobler than the self-protectiveness of folk who are conceited and thin-skinned and, perhaps, unaware of the value of truth.

—Dave Hunt
1998

Scriptures taken from the King James Version.
Adapted from pages 36-39, *Beyond Seduction:
A Return to Biblical Christianity* by Dave Hunt
(Harvest House, 1987)

Our Mission

The Berean Call is a nonprofit,
tax-exempt corporation
which exists to

Alert believers in Christ to unbiblical teachings and practices impacting the church.

Exhort believers to give greater heed to biblical discernment and truth regarding teachings and practices being currently pro-moted in the church.

Supply believers with teaching, information, and materials which will encourage the love of God’s truth, and assist in the development of biblical discernment.

Mobilize believers in Christ to action in obedience to the scriptural command to “earnestly contend for the faith” (Jude 3).

Impact the church of Jesus Christ with the necessity of trusting the Scriptures as the only rule of faith, practice, and a life pleasing to God.

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A Desperate Need For Correction

Correction is one of the most conspicuously absent yet essential ministries in the church today. There are those who seek to avoid correction by hiding behind a misapplication of Christ’s words, “Judge not, that ye be not judged” (Mt 7:1). It is conveniently forgotten that these words were spoken by the same One who warned the Jews to “judge righteous judgment” (Jn 7:24), told us to judge the fruit of prophets (Mt 7:16) and promised His disciples that they would sit on thrones judging Israel (Mt 19:28).

From the context and the remainder of Scripture, it seems clear that Christ was warning us not to judge motives, because these are hidden from us. We must put the best reasonable interpretation upon what others say and do, not judging their hearts, which only God knows. However, we must judge doctrines and deeds.

Paul’s Exhortation

Paul exhorted Timothy, “Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.” On what basis would one reprove or rebuke without having judged conduct or doctrine to be wrong? Such correction is a major theme throughout Scripture. Public teaching of false doctrine and *publicly* known sin must both be rebuked publicly. Paul reminded Timothy, “Them that sin rebuke *before all*, that others also may fear” (1 Tm 5:20).

To the church at Corinth Paul wrote, “Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the others judge” (1 Cor 14:29). Public teaching, whether in sermons or songs or the operation of the gifts of the Spirit, must be judged publicly as to biblical authenticity and accuracy. This should be done by the pastor and elders at the time the teaching occurs in the local fellowship, though this seldom happens. It is even more essential, however, that the teaching pouring forth from the powerfully influential mass media—radio, television, magazines, and books—be judged and, if found wanting, publicly corrected. That goes for this author’s teachings and writings as well as those of all others.

A Scriptural Example

Paul considered it necessary and proper to name publicly Hymenaeus and Philetus because of their publicly taught false doctrine which had “overthrow[n] the faith of some” (2 Tm 2:17-18). How much more essential would public correction be if a modern Hymenaeus or Philetus as a bestselling author or popular Christian television personality were leading *millions* astray! Instead of giving priority to protecting the reputations of those whose teachings may be publicly questioned, should we not rather be concerned for the thousands and perhaps millions of people whom they influence? Such an attitude should surely characterize every leader who is truly a man or woman of God.

The Problem Today

Those in control of most Christian television programming generally refuse to allow on their stations or networks Christian leaders who would question their views. Moreover, instead of judging within their own ranks, as Scripture says must be done, they decry correction as “divisive” and instead preach “unity” based not upon truth but upon the agreement not to disagree with one another. There is much talk of *love*, as though

it somehow rules out *correction*. Yet the Bible teaches that love speaks the *truth* (Eph 4:15), which may very well be “negative.” Real love corrects those who are loved: “Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth” (Heb 12:6). Jesus himself declared, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten” (Rv 3:19). No wonder Solomon said, “Rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee” (Prv 9:8)! A wise man desires and welcomes correction and loves the one who corrects, considering rebuke not an “attack” but a kindness. Inspired of the Holy Spirit, Solomon declared,

Correction is grievous unto him that forsaketh the way, and he that hateth reproof shall die.

Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding...but fools despise wisdom and instruction (Prv 15:10; 9:8,10; 1:7).

The Biblical Pattern

From Genesis to Revelation, a major theme of the Bible is correction. This is because God loves us and desires to lead us from death and judgment into the eternal and abundant life available in Christ. Referring to the Old Testament narrative accounts of the history of Israel, Paul declared, “They are written for our *admonition*” (1 Cor 10:11). John the Baptist preached repentance and correction, and so did Christ. Much of what our Lord said was in the nature of reproof aimed directly at the religious leaders, but indicting also the typical Jew of His day. It is dishonest to focus only upon what one considers to be the positive aspects of Christ’s ministry and to fail to take to heart and apply in our lives and churches the correction He brought.

Christ did not hesitate to call the religious leaders “hypocrites” and “whited sepulchres” and “blind leaders of the blind,” and His own disciples “fools and slow of heart.” He had obviously never taken a Dale Carnegie course in “How to Win Friends

and Influence People,” and did not consider being positive the only, or even the best, way to present truth! The pastors, evangelists, and radio and television preachers who fail to press upon themselves and their audiences the corrective teaching of Christ because they don’t want to be negative are not only ignoring the example He set but are repeating the very sin for which He rebuked the religious leaders of His day.

Much of the New Testament was written to correct error that had already crept into the church in the first century. The epistles of Paul, Peter, James, John, and Jude embody the major corrective doctrines of the church, which of course are still valid today. Leaders in the early church were expected to be involved in an ongoing corrective ministry. Unfortunately, many of today’s most popular church leaders seem astonishingly unwilling either to judge the teaching of other leading Christians or to accept any correction themselves.

Division or Correction?

It is claimed by some that openly questioning or correcting the doctrinal teachings of church leaders is divisive, as though all division were bad and to be avoided. Yet Christ declared that He came to bring division (Lk 12:51), and it followed His ministry wherever He went (Jn 7:43; 9:16; 10:19; etc.). The division He brought was essential: it separated between truth and error, between light and darkness.

Romans 16:17, a favorite proof-text for those who cry “division” in order to avoid *correction*, is usually quoted only in part: “Mark them which cause divisions”—as though “division” were the problem that is being dealt with. However, the verse actually says, “Mark them which cause divisions and offences *contrary to the doctrine which*