

Why Do People Not Accept What We Teach?

INTRODUCTION:

1. As Christians we must deal with situations that involve disagreements concerning what God's word teaches.
2. In our attempts to address these situations, I am sure you have found that people often are unwilling to listen to what you have to say, even if you are presenting scripture backing your words.
 - A. This is because there are certain obstacles that hinder the influence of the truth in people's lives.
 - B. When this happens, we should ask ourselves why they are not accepting the teaching, what is hindering them?
3. This sort of examination is pertinent whether we are considering people in the world, including those in false religions, or people within the body of Christ.
 - A. For, there can be some basic reasons for people's lack of acceptance which, if we are conscious of them, will help us to be better prepared to present the truth so that it can be accepted and to handle their possible rejection of it.
 - B. So, let's take some time to explore why people do not accept what we teach.

BODY:

I. Looking Inward—The Teacher:

- A. People may reject what we teach because we are WRONG!
 1. We as members of a church of Christ do not have a monopoly on truth.
 - a. For many years we had an unstated idea that the church of Christ is always right, which not only expresses a wrong, denominational view of the church, but extreme arrogance.
 - i. I found this to be a real problem when addressing institutionalism, seeing that people assumed because churches of Christ do something, it must be right!
 - ii. But it can be a problem on our end as well, seeing we can come across as self-righteous know-it-all and intimidate others.
 - b. Unfortunately, among a growing number of churches of Christ we are seeing a lack of a stand for any basic truth and an acceptance of denominational doctrines and churches.
 2. We can be wrong despite being sincere, confident in our knowledge of the scriptures, and eloquent in our presentation, just like Apollos (Acts 18:24-26 – “Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. ²⁵ This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶ So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.”).
 3. If sincerity and confidence toward one's beliefs do not insure the truth of one's position, how do we have real confidence?
 - a. Assurance of knowing the truth is found in developing a love and dedication to the truth.
 - i. Proverbs 2:1-6 – “My son, if you receive my words, And treasure my commands within you, ² So that you incline your ear to wisdom, And apply your heart to understanding; ³ Yes, if you cry out for discernment, And lift up your voice for understanding, ⁴ If you seek her as silver, And search for her as for hidden treasures; ⁵ Then you will understand the fear of the Lord, And find the knowledge of God.”
 - ii. Matt. 7:7-8 – “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.”
 - b. When an individual truly loves the truth and wants to know it, they will come to know truth, whether it be through their own searching, or by *correction* of others (2 Tim. 3:15-16 – “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”).
 - c. That correction is not just for our use of scriptures!
- B. Truth may be rejected because we are shooting at the wrong target.
 1. We often make the mistake of assuming we know what someone believes without ever asking them.

2. Because of a lack of Bible study, lack of any definitive teaching, and the blurring of denominational lines, people can be members of a church while never believing what the church stands for or having really any definitive idea what they should believe.
 3. The best approach is to ask where a person is spiritually, or what they believe (Acts 8:29-35 – “Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go near and overtake this chariot.”³⁰ So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, “Do you understand what you are reading?”³¹ And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him.³² Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this: “He was led as a sheep to slaughter; And as a lamb before its shearer is silent, So He does not open His mouth.³³ “In humiliation His judgment was taken away; Who will relate His generation? For His life is removed from the earth.”³⁴ The eunuch answered Philip and said, “Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?”³⁵ Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him.”).
- C. The truth we present may be rejected because we are **unclear** in our presentation.
1. One of the problems that arises is that we assume that because people use the same words we use, that they are using them the same way we use them.
 - a. That would not be an accurate assessment in most cases, and it would be wise to ask people what they mean by their terminology or what they think your terminology means.
 - i. Even using terms like baptism, repentance, and Christ’s revelation can cause confusion.
 - ii. For, the religious world thinks of baptism as sprinkling or pouring, repentance as being sorry for sin, and the revelation of Christ as referring to His second coming.
 - b. So, we must follow the exhortation of Peter that says, “If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God.” (1 Pet. 4:11)
 - i. This means that we must be careful to use biblical terms and define them biblically so all will know the meaning.
 - ii. Otherwise you will be speaking two different languages!
- D. Some may reject the truth because we **do not give adequate proof**.
1. Error is common because it has a sprinkling of truth to make it sound better.
 - a. This necessitates that we go the extra mile to assure that as we teach, we use the scriptures in a logical, accurate, easy to understand fashion (2 Tim. 2:15 – “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth”).
 - b. This requires that we have a plan, that we have forethought (1 Pet. 3:15 – “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear”).
 2. One of the best examples of following these rules is found in Peter’s proving to the Jews that Jesus as the Christ was to die and rise from the dead (Acts 2:22-32).
 - a. He clearly stated the point he wanted them to get—that Jesus, one approved by God, was crucified according to God’s prophesied plan (2:22-24).
 - b. He used scripture they were familiar with to back up His point (2:24-28).
 - c. He gave a contextually clear, precise, and logical meaning to the passages (2:29-32).

II. Looking outward—The Listener:

- A. Many people don’t accept the truth because they are unable to understand the truth.
1. This is not to say that there is a problem with the word of God or even with your presentation, but with the individuals themselves.
 2. This can be an issue when trying to teach brethren because...
 - a. Some lack biblical knowledge because they are babes in Christ, lacking exposure to the word and a foundation upon which to build deeper truth. To them God commands to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3:16).
 - b. Some, who should be teachers because of their exposure to the word, regress in their understanding because of a lack of diligence.

- c. Hebrews addresses these two classes of Christians, excusing the first, and rebuking the second (Heb. 5:12-14 – “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. ¹³ For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. ¹⁴ But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”).
 - d. Immaturity and lack of growth or regression makes it difficult for these Christians to understand the finer points of God’s will and hinder the communication of truth.
- B. Many people will not accept the truth because of personal bias.
- 1. Pre-conceived ideas, or biases, that often block the truth from their minds (1 Cor. 1:21-24 – “Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? ²¹ For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. ²² For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, ²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”).
 - a. Despite God’s “foolishness” being wiser than the greatest wisdom of man, and His “weakness” being stronger than the greatest strength of man, man still rejects God’s powerful gospel!
 - b. Why, because of personal bias—because it is not what they desire it to be!
 - c. People have come to believe that you should have religion the way *you* want it. So, if what is presented doesn’t suit them, they will reject it for something more to their liking.
 - 2. Brethren, you may not know it, but preachers of truth are often presented within denominational churches as being evil, as being a cult, as being followers of Satan, and as the Antichrist.
 - a. I have known of situations where gospel preachers had individuals who would not look them in the eyes because they were afraid that the preacher had some sort of hypnotizing power.
 - b. The bias can go both ways, seeing Christians can automatically treat denominational people as though they were dishonest and unworthy of hearing the truth presented with love, which truly hinders acceptance of the truth and violates God’s will (Eph. 4:15).
- C. Many will not accept the truth because they do not want to accept it.
- 1. Many will not hear because they love unrighteousness far more than the truth.
 - a. Many hate the truth because their deeds are evil (John 3:19-20 – “And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.”).
 - b. Many have pleasure in unrighteousness, so God sends them a strong delusion so that they will believe a lie (2 Thess. 2:11-12 – “And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, ¹² that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”).
 - 2. Many dislike the consequences of obedience (Matt. 10:34-39 – “Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law’; ³⁶ and a man’s enemies will be those of his own household.’ ³⁷ He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁸ And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁹ He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.”).
- D. Brethren, in any of these cases, we do not have the tools to change these people’s hearts or minds.
- 1. We cannot change or water down the message somehow that they might believe (2 Tim. 4:1-5 – “I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: ² Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. ³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will

heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴ and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. ⁵ But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”)

2. We cannot force them to accept the message, because some soils are wayside soils (Lk. 8:11-12 – “Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. ¹² Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.”)

CONCLUSION:

1. Brethren, let us do our best to present the truth to the world with an open mind, seeking to know who we are talking to and what they believe, to present the truth with clarity, assuring that our terms are properly defined, and giving adequate proof of our ascertains from scripture used properly.
2. Yet, in doing so we must understand that people will not always accept the truth no matter what you do, seeing that as Jesus said in Matt. 7:13-14, “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. ¹⁴ Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”
3. Yet, thankfully, there will be individuals, whether in the world or in the church, that will listen and accept the truth to their salvation and to our encouragement. So, let us be preacher of the world and let God give the increase.