

Shepherd's Guide for Week of 8-2-09

Different Beliefs Within The Same Faith Pt.1

Day 1:

Read Through Romans 14.

What were the differences being experienced between the Jewish Christian and the Gentile Christian? How hard would it have been for either of them to change immediately?

Discuss some of the differences in beliefs that you have from other believers...and that you see between different believers. Knowing that a different belief than yours is not always a sin, but it may also be faithful, try to draw out those things that you may be lead to quarrel over that may still be within the realm of faith.

Pray together that the Lord would keep you from ever doing anything to fuel hostility between brothers and sisters in Christ. Knowing that love does not keep a record of records, prayerfully consider the forgiveness that you may need to give to another, or ask of another. Blessed are the peacemakers.

Day 2:

Read Romans 14:1

Within the faith, there are weaker people, and stronger people. Romans 12 say that it is God who gives different measures of faith, to different believers. This means that it is by God's design, that we have different beliefs within the same faith.

Spend some time considering the blessings that go along with His children, though unified, are not uniform.

Discuss how God can be glorified and we can be built up by different, various, faithful responses to the Word that are unified, though not uniform and identical. Pray that God would keep you from being narrow minded. Ask God to open your eyes to the beauties of His creativity. Pray that God would utilize you to do all that you can to peacefully fight against the quarreling of opinions between brothers and sisters in Christ.

Day 3:

The Jew wanted the Gentile to be more like the Jew. The Gentile wanted the Jew to be more like the Gentile. Paul says, "We all need to be more like Christ". Consider how many of our churches simply think that everyone just needs to be more like them... to operate how they operate, to be structured how we are structured...

Romans 10 says that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness for everyone who believes. For the Jew, that means that their pursuit of righteousness no longer ends with the law, but with Christ. And for the Gentile who has never had a law to live by, you now have CHRIST!

Spend some time discussing the standards that we have a tendency to hold higher than Christ. This should be a sobering discussion. Example... is it "Christ + I better get to vote" OR "Christ + you better dress up for corporate worship" OR "Christ + this church better do things the way that I am used to"...?

Remember the question "Is this person transgressing God's law OR my law?" Our opinions and preferences are not the standard by which we require and urge others to live by.

Pray that God would show you those areas where, by setting your own standard for others to live by, you are being faithless, despising, and judgmental. Pray that He

would quicken you to patience, gentleness, respectfulness, humility, and love by His standards.

Day 4:

Read Romans 14:5-6

Welcoming other believers, whose beliefs are different from yours, though still in the same faith, is not a call to weaken your convictions. We are called to hold our convictions in bold humility. The challenge is to be “fully convinced” as to what we believe, yet still remain completely teachable. This is not easy.

Discuss with your family if the other members of your family (or discuss with your friends) if they see you as teachable. This should be humbling. For some of us, we think that our children need to see us as having everything figured out. In reality, it would be far better for our children, friends, co-workers, spouses, etc... to see us as teachable, knowing that we have not arrived, knowing that we still have more to learn. Because it is in this state that they will see you humbling yourself before the Lord, while welcoming the insight, accountability, and searchability from those that you are walking with in community.

Spend some time praying for the community that you live in. That our hearts would be broken...that we would stop quarreling over disputable matters, that we would be better at welcoming, and less quickened to fighting. Pray that God would strengthen our convictions while growing us in teachability. Confess to God and each other how you are both needed and needy.