

Genderless Toy Section at Target

David Halbrook

“Right now, our teams are working [to] phase out gender-based signage. . . In the Toys aisles, we’ll also remove reference to gender, including the use of pink, blue, yellow or green paper” <https://corporate.target.com/article/2015/08/gender-based-signs-corporate>

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction (Prov. 1:7)—even in gender! You thought it was obvious, but as you can see, even this knowledge is being rejected (evidenced by news stories about “genderless bathrooms”). Paul identifies how such basic knowledge is lost in Ephesians 4:18—darkness is the result of ignorance which is the result of blindness (a mind that ignores known truth, Matt. 13:15; Rom. 1:28).

Do differences matter? Of course they do, but have you noticed our society ignoring many differences in pursuit of toleration over truth? American tolerance means you ignore differences and avoid believing that someone is right and someone is wrong. Have you seen this same mindset in “American religion”? Let us think more about that in this column next week. Send us your observations or questions.

Editor’s Note: Our article in *Arkansas Weekly* is one you could hand to 99% of the people in our community, and they will likely read it. It lays the groundwork for next week’s article. If you hand someone this article maybe they will be interested enough to read next week’s article and continue reading and learning. Is it worth a try?

Simple opportunities to teach the lost and assist each other.

Pray for: Ed & Janice White, The Ledgerwoods, Novela Puckett, Noleka Hopper, Samuel Southall, others with ongoing trials, new Christians among us, and Ben Calderon with whom we fellowship (share) as he works in Conway.

See the scrolling charts for a report on the funds we sent to our Filipino brethren.

Our fall gospel meeting with Donnie Rader is September 13-18.

Join us each Sunday at 10AM (classes), 10:45AM, & 5PM and Wednesday at 7PM.

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The Exhorter

Acts 11:23 *Exhorted them all... cleave unto the Lord*
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For the Truth’s Sake: Contend for the Faith

Ron Halbrook

For the truth’s sake, Christians should “earnestly contend for the faith” (Jude 3). Debate is a verbal study, answer, defense, discussion. Paul was “set for” it. Peter said to be “always ready” to engage in it (Phil. 1:17; 1 Pet. 3:15). Most people today believe it is not right for the Bible to be debated. We hear gospel preachers should avoid it all costs. We hear Christians should stay away from all debates. Men say that debating is not approved by the “meek and mild” Christ—that the Apostles do not authorize it—that true Christian attitudes forbid it.

Paul said such a time as this would come, and it has!!! “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned to fables” (2 Tim. 4:3-4). People’s ears are itching for easy, soft, smooth teaching. Plenty of preachers supply the compromised, watered-down, lenient teaching necessary to tickle itching ears.

As in the days when Israel mixed human teaching with divine law, the preachers today say, “Peace, peace; when there is no peace,” and “the people love to have it so”! A “gospel preacher” is no longer expected to challenge error in its strongholds and its citadels. Instead, he is expected to grin and play dead like a possum, in the face of sin and error. It’s “unchristian” to debate. So we must either pretend that issues between truth and error do not exist or else that they do not matter very much. Ignorance is considered bliss to the people, and silence is considered golden by the preachers.

Preachers (all Christians!) who are concerned for the truth and who want to obey the word of Christ, are neither ashamed nor afraid to discuss and debate religious issues honorably. The Lord and his chosen Apostles were not “too good” or “too busy” to engage in such. Most preachers today are weak-kneed “jolly good-fellows”

who want the right to teach in public with immunity from public examination. Some have no real convictions, others do not have the courage to match their convictions.

Let us plead for a return to simple New Testament Christianity without human heads and headquarters, human creeds and clergies, human traditions and theologies. Let us oppose false doctrine of every kind, and regard all doctrine not revealed in the New Testament as false. Let us be willing to be examined. If we are practicing things not found in the Bible, or failing to practice things commanded there, we must make correction. The Bible is the final authority for every religious question. It is perfect, all-sufficient, and inerrant as the inspired Word of God (1 Cor. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). "For the truth's sake," Christians must not be afraid or ashamed of public review, discussion, debate, or examination.

"Please Judge Me"

Bryan Gibson

That's right, it's time we flipped the script on the overused and misused slogan of so many – "don't judge me." Me personally, I want to know when I'm wrong – in any area of my spiritual life. I do "examine (my) own work" (Galatians 6:2); I do "judge" myself (1 Corinthians 11:31), but I may be blind to what others can clearly see.

Just to be clear, I'm not talking about the "command fire to come down from heaven" spirit of judgment displayed by James and John (Luke 9:51-56). Final judgment belongs to the Lord, but you can help me get ready for that judgment by judging me now – by pointing out my sins.

I would urge you to not judge me too hastily, to "not judge according to appearance, but...with righteous judgment" (John 7:24). But if you know the facts, and the facts point to my guilt, please love me enough to rebuke me (Revelation 3:19), because "open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed" (Proverbs 27:5). "Faithful are the wounds of a friend" (Proverbs 27:6), so don't be afraid to wound me.

I would also prefer that you not judge me hypocritically, that you not be guilty of the same things of which you accuse me (Matthew 7:1-5; Romans 2:1-3). Not for my sake, because your hypocrisy doesn't change my innocence or guilt, but for your sake. Make sure you humbly apply the same standard (the gospel) to yourself that you apply to me, and let's both be willing to repent.

And yes, it would be easier on me (and you) if you come to me, at least initially, "in a spirit of gentleness" (Galatians 6:1). Circumstances may call for a sharper rebuke (Titus 1:13), and if that's the case, it's on me to respond with a "broken and a contrite heart" (Psalms 51:17). Bottom line – be careful in your approach, but from my standpoint, how you speak to me doesn't change the facts. If I'm guilty of sin, that's my biggest concern, not the manner in which you spoke.

It could be that my actions call for a public rebuke, much like Peter received at the hands of Paul (Galatians 2:13-14). And though I have no intention to do so, if I publicly teach false doctrine, I shouldn't be surprised when you feel the need to warn others about me. Public teaching invites public scrutiny, and if necessary, public rebuke. I understand that, and I also understand that if I listen to correction along the way, it should never come to that.

"Don't judge me" – here's what God says about that approach: "He who refuses correction goes astray" (Proverbs 10:17). "He who hates corrections is stupid" (Proverbs 12:1). "He who hates correction will die" (Proverbs 15:10). "He who disdains instruction despises his own soul..." (Proverbs 15:32).

"Please judge me" – here's what God says about that approach: "He who regards a rebuke will be honored" (13:18). "He who receives correction is prudent" (15:5). "The ear that hears the rebukes of life will abide among the wise...he who heeds rebuke gets understanding" (Proverbs 15:31-32).

So, which is the better approach? You be the judge.

Preaching Fear

John R. Gibson

One of the strange phenomena of our day is the spectacle of religion dropping the appeal to fear while other human interests have picked it up. Just look around. Everybody is preaching fear except the church.

We are being taught to fear everything from AIDS to radon, from the hole in the ozone to the cutting down of the rain forests. We see fear as a good thing - something worthwhile and productive. We want people to fear except when it comes to religion. Then it becomes a "no, no."

We are enjoined to talk exclusively about the love of God. Don't mention the wrath of God. Don't talk about hell. Don't warn the disobedient. So, we are told, don't preach the fear of God.

". . . Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear" (1 Peter 1:17). Living in fear! It's the right thing to do!