

When Christians Disagree – Part 1

Romans 14:1-12

Pastor John Miller

In Psalm 133, the Psalmist (David) cried, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for the brethren to dwell together in unity!” It is good and it is pleasant, but the reality is that God’s people do not always dwell together in unity. The truth is, many times we disagree. We bicker, we don’t get along, and sometimes we divide. We have churches that split over things that aren’t really a cause that we should split over. You know, most every local church mentioned in the New Testament had its problems—divisions, disagreements, and issues to contend with. I sometimes hear people say, “You know, we need to get back to the church of the New Testament. We need to get back to the church of the first century.” I want to ask, “Which one would you want to get back to? Would you like to go back to the church at Corinth?” I’m glad that God didn’t call me to pastor the first church of the Corinthians because they were carnal, divided, fighting and bickering. They were abusing spiritual gifts. They had fallen into immorality, and Paul had to write to correct the problems there in the city of Corinth.

When Paul wrote to the Galatians, he said, “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth?” They were biting, devouring and consuming one another. In Philippians 4, to mention another one (and I believe the church at Philippi was one of Paul’s favorite congregations), Paul wrote, “I beseech Euodias and Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.” They were two women who weren’t getting along together. A Bible teacher by the name of H.A. Ironside said the reason these two women weren’t getting along, one was “odious” and the other “soon touchy.” They just couldn’t seem to get it together, so Paul had to write and say, “Look, you women need to be of the same mind in the things of the Lord.”

Ray Stedman said that the favorite indoor sport of Christians is trying to change each other. We want to kind of put people in our mold (I like to call it a “trip”). We want to put our “trip” on them. We want to have them follow our rules and standards instead of letting the Holy Spirit change them through God’s Word. We want to play “Holy Spirit.” We want to manipulate and get them to see what we see, believe how we believe, act the way we act, and even dress the way we dress. That’s called uniformity. That comes from pressure on the outside. Some churches have uniformity—they all have the same haircuts, wear the same clothes, carry the same Bibles, drive the same cars, look, talk, and act alike. They all have to believe the same thing to fit into their little mold, and their church motto is “us four, no more, shut the door” kind of a thing. And, if you get a little weird, we kick you out of the club, you know. You can’t be part of our church. But, unity comes from the Holy Spirit on the inside transforming us on the outside. Uniformity comes from pressure on the outside, and unity comes from the Holy Spirit’s work in our hearts on the inside.

I just want to point out a couple of verses before we jump into these 12 verses. In Romans 14:1, notice with me, “Him that is weak in the faith...,” Paul says, “receive ye...,” that’s the theme of chapters 14 and 15—receive him. But, don’t do it in order to dispute, argue or debate about

“doubtful disputations” my King James Bible says. Jump down to Romans 15:7, same topic continuing, “Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.” Now, the topic of Christian liberty, getting along with and receiving one another, starts in Romans 14:1 and runs to Romans 15:13. I don’t want to confuse you with this information, but I want you to see the context from Romans 14:1 to Romans 15:13. All of that section deals with the subject of how to get along with and how to relate to one another as Christians. In the whole section, Paul basically says three things: Don’t judge, don’t stumble each other, and follow Christ’s example with forbearance and love. That’s a summary of this whole section.

What was the problem that was going on in the Roman church for which Paul in Romans 14:1 says that we need to receive him that is weak in the faith but not to doubtful disputations? The problem in the church at Rome concerned the relationship between two groups. One group Paul calls the weak, and the other group he calls the strong. You’re going to see it very clear. He mentions in Romans 14:1 the “weak,” but peak real quickly with me in Romans 15:1. (I hope you’re still with me. Are you tracking with me?) “We then that are...,” group number 1, “strong ought to bear the infirmities...,” weaknesses, “of the weak, and not to please ourselves.” That’s a great summary of what Paul is saying, “We then that are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those who are weak and not to live to please ourselves.” Two groups—the strong and the weak. Some of you right now are saying, “I’m in the strong group tonight. I’m one of the strong group. I’m not one of the weak group.” Let me explain most likely who these two groups are. It is believed most commonly, (and we can’t be dogmatic about it, but I think it lends itself to sound interpretation) that the strong there refers to Gentiles, not Jews who are believers but Gentiles. Both of them are Christians—both the strong and the weak are Christians—but the strong would seem to be Gentiles who having come to Christ, and understanding their position in Christ, exercised greater liberty in Christ. They were mature believers, strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and thus because of that, they had a greater liberty. Not license. They weren’t conducting themselves sinfully. Grace never allows us to live sinful lives. We cannot turn the grace of God into lasciviousness. That is completely unbiblical and not the Christian life, but when you understand God’s grace you have great liberty in Christ but you also want to walk in love toward others.

Now, the weak were most likely made up of Jews who were believers. So, Christians came in two categories: Gentile believers and Jewish believers. You say, “Why were the Jewish believers weak in the faith?” Because they came out of Judaism which had laws, rules, regulations, dietary laws, days of worship, feasts, new moons, Sabbath days, all kinds of stuff, and some of them, no doubt, had a hard time leaving that behind and understanding they are complete in Christ and the grace of God. Some of them were still hung up on dietary laws. Some of them were worried about eating meat. Ray Stedman actually said that. I would’ve loved to have seen Paul’s face soon after his conversion when he got together with Gentile Christians when one of them, maybe at a potluck, handed him a ham sandwich and how Paul would have responded to that, “Ahhh! Kooties!”

The first Christians were Jews, then God started saving Gentiles, and there was a real tension there. Those Jewish Christians had a hard time accepting Gentiles, so God had to give Peter a

vision of this sheet coming down from heaven with all these creepy animals on it. He told Peter to rise, kill, and eat them. Peter said, “No, Lord, I’ve never eaten anything common or unclean.” God said, “What I’ve called clean, that call not common.” Immediately Ding Dong the doorbell rang at Peter’s house. He went downstairs, and there were some Gentiles there saying, “What must we do to be saved?” (A long story short—I just made real short) Peter said, “Wow! God just gave me this whole vision to let me know that you guys can be saved, and I shouldn’t call you common or unclean.” This guy said, “Well, come to my house. I want you to share the Gospel with us.” So, he went to the home of Cornelius, they were all converted, and God saved the Gentiles just as He did the Jews.

Why is one weak in the faith and one strong? This is very important for you to grasp and to get ahold of. The ones who are strong in their faith were strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. The ones that were weak in their faith were not strong in God’s grace, and they were legalistic. They knew they were saved by God’s grace, but they thought they could be sanctified by laws. Now, listen very carefully, lots of Christians make the same mistake. They understand that I’m saved by the grace of God but now I’ve got to be a real good Christian, so the ten rules for the Christian, you know, pray for one hour every day, read a chapter of your Bible every day—which I highly recommend—but if you don’t do that God’s not going to send you to hell. God’s not going to kick you out of His family. You say, “One day I didn’t quite read the whole chapter, I only read a half a chapter. I don’t get to go to heaven anymore.” We have these rules (and I’m going to share a few issues of contemporary Christians today) of thinking, “Man, I’ve gotta be a good Christian and do this, and work hard, and try to be a good, good person for Christ.” We’re saved and sanctified by God’s grace by His Holy Spirit. God’s Spirit saves and transforms us. We are transformed by the Spirit of God not by rules and regulations, so we need to understand that having begun in the Spirit we need to continue in the Spirit. The Spirit produces the fruit in our lives, and that’s the way to grow as a believer.

The categories would be legalism, those that are weak in the faith, and the other would be those who have liberty controlled by love. On one extreme you have legalism (you’re going by these rules) and on the other would be license (you just live however you want), but a balance in the middle is Christian liberty controlled by love. If you’re taking notes and want to capsule the thought, it is: Christian liberty controlled by love—love for God and love for other people so that you realize you can’t just live however you want.

There were issues between the weaker brethren and the stronger. The weaker brethren had more scruples or greater convictions that things were wrong in two areas—diet (or food and what you eat) and days. These things still exist today. People say, “You can’t be spiritual if you eat hamburgers. You can’t be spiritual if you eat meat,” or “You can’t be spiritual if you eat certain kinds of food.” And then they say, “If you’re really going to be spiritual, you have to worship on special days, whether it be the Sabbath day or a monthly celebration.” The Jews had a weekly, a monthly, and annual celebrations—the new moons and the Sabbath days. These weaker brethren, which are primarily Jews, were hung up on days and diet, and a lot of Christians have the same issues.

Here are the two things in verse 1 that Paul tells the stronger in the faith. For the better part he's talking to the more mature, the stronger in the faith, telling them that they need to receive those that are weaker in the faith. The problem is, those that are weak in the faith have more scruples and are more legalistic. They are usually the ones that have a hard time receiving those who have liberty. "How can you call yourself a Christian and go to that movie?" "How can you call yourself a Christian and go out and dance?" "How do you call yourself a Christian and wear those clothes?" "How do you call yourself a Christian and listen to that music?" I understand that, but we need to be careful that we don't try to put our standards on other people. Usually we, with the tighter standards, have a hard time with people with greater liberty. "Well, I don't know who they think they are! How spiritual can they be? They're dancing. They can't be spiritual and do that!" So, he's writing to the stronger believer telling him two things: Receive him (the weaker brother), and don't debate or quarrel over doubtful matters.

The word "receive him" in verse 1 means to welcome warmly, to show kindness. It's accepting without correcting. In verse 3 he says, "Don't despise them." Since we can't change them, we shouldn't despise them. He's talking to the stronger saying, "You need to warmly accept the weaker." This is the same word used for God accepting us as sinners. Now, remember, they're both Christians—the weak and strong in the faith. At the end of verse 1, he says, "Don't debate or quarrel with him over doubtful matters." My King James Bible has "doubtful disputations." What's a "doubtful disputation"? He's talking about doubtful things. Don't argue, quibble, and fight over doubtful things. Christians like to make a mountain out of a molehill. They like to make the biggest deal out of things that are doubtful, things that aren't really clear in the Bible, they're not black and white. He saying, "Don't do that."

Now, there are things that we should fight over. Jude says, "...earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." We should fight over the inerrancy, the infallibility and reliability, and the inspiration of the Bible. We should take a stand and not compromise over the deity of Christ and the triunity of God's nature, the bodily resurrection and substitutionary death, the Gospel by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. These are things that we cannot compromise on, but there are issues in the church that we shouldn't fight and quibble over. Let me give you a few. I'm opening up a can of worms to even mention them because different cultures, different times, different places, in different parts of the world Christians see them as acceptable, other Christians see them as not acceptable, but these are areas where we can have some liberty and we don't need to be rigid on, and it takes maturity and love to be able to handle them.

What are some of the gray areas that Christians fight over? They fight over the issues of theater. I haven't seen my list of questions for tomorrow yet, but one of them is about going to the movies, about seeing an "R" movie. I'm going to talk about that tomorrow, and Christians will debate. I grew up in a very strict, holiness pentecostal home. I signed a pledge in my youth group: I won't smoke, I won't chew, I won't hang out with those that do; I won't go to the theater, especially on Sunday because I'm a good Christian. You can't turn in your Bible to 2 Flesh-alonians and have a verse that says, "Thou shalt not go to the movies." I always wondered,

"Why do my friends get to go to the movies? I don't get to go to the movies." I think you need to be careful about what you watch, and you need to be selective. The Bible talks about thinking on these things that are pure, holy, good and lovely, and we don't want to subject ourselves to things that are evil, but the theater, in and of itself, is not intrinsically sinful or evil. Churches meet in theaters. Concerts can take place in theaters, but to fight, bicker, and argue about Christians don't go to the movies?

I will admit that I very rarely go to the theater, and when I do, I'm very selective about what I see. I'm always kind of freaked out that somebody from the church is going to see me. "There's Pastor Miller at the picture show." You know, they have all these movies and you don't know, you're going to spy on me to see which theater I go into and watch what I'm going to watch or something, but I always feel kind of like, "Oh no. I don't want to stumble anybody." If I'm stumbling you—what are you doing at the theater? "Pastor Miller, I saw you at the movies." Well, what were you doing there?

Christians will fight over the theater and the movies. They'll fight over (and these are not in the order of importance, and I'm not trying to deal with anything in the church) issues of cosmetics. Should women wear makeup? Now, obviously we don't have rules like that here at Revival Christian Fellowship. Alcohol. Should you have a glass of wine at a meal? Should Christians drink? Tobacco. Is it sinful and wicked for Christians to smoke?

I find it interesting that the famous Prince of Preachers, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the British preacher, smoked cigars. A preacher across town, at the same time by the name of Joseph Parker, went to the theater. Spurgeon opposed the theater and preached against Joseph Parker, and Joseph Parker opposed tobacco and preached against Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Now, when I read a Spurgeon sermon I think, "Man, this guy was so anointed and so eloquent. I can't imagine puffing between points." "And for my second point...." a puffing preacher.

G. Campbell Morgan smoked cigars. One time a young man came to Spurgeon and said, "Mr. Spurgeon, someone gave me a box of cigars. What should I do with them?" Spurgeon said, "Give them to me and I'll smoke them for the glory of God." Then someone asked Spurgeon, (I've got all these cool Spurgeon cigar stories) "Will you ever stop smoking cigars?" He said, "If I begin to smoke in excess, I will stop." They asked, "What's in excess?" He said, "Two cigars at the same time!" We'll get there in a few weeks, but one day when Spurgeon was walking down the street in London, he saw a tobacco store with a sign that said: We sell the kind of tobacco Spurgeon smokes. In seeing that sign, he there and then determined that he would no longer smoke or touch tobacco because he didn't want to be known for anything but the gospel of Jesus Christ, so he actually began to be controlled by love—that I might offend, I may hurt, or I may stumble someone else.

Card playing. Is it okay for Christians to play cards? I must confess, I don't do cards just because I've never done cards. I don't know anything about cards, but if I just see a stack of cards I think "evil." Pray for me. It's just kind of an association to me, but you know they're just paper. There's nothing intrinsically sinful or evil. I already mentioned dancing. Fashions. "How

can she be a Christian and wear that dress?” or “How can he be a Christian and do that?” or whether people should wear jewelry. Did you know the first Christians in America, the pilgrim fathers, were Puritans and felt it would be sinful even to wear a wedding ring? You would actually be arrested and put in jail if you wore a wedding ring or jewelry. That was a sinful thing.

Music. Some churches fight over music, whether to sing hymns or whether to have drums and guitar. Bible translations. There's the King James only people and “This is the only true Word of God. This is the Bible Paul preached from.” They make a real big deal about translations, and “we can't fellowship if you don't have my translation.”

Motive baptism. Do you baptize face forward or backwards? Do you dunk or do you sprinkle? Just how do you baptize? I've always thought it would be cool to throw people off the pier at Oceanside. “Father, Son, Holy Ghooooost,” and if you make it back to the beach you're saved. You're a disciple. We fight over the silliest things. Someone put it in a poem:

Believe as I believe—no more, no less;

That I am right (and no one else) confess.

Feel as I feel, think only as I think;

Eat what I eat, and drink but what I drink.

Look as I look, do always as I do;

And then—and only then—I'll fellowship with you

So many people are like that in the church. Why are we fighting over things that aren't essentials in the Word of God?

I'm going to give four reasons why you that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and should receive one another. The first is in verses 2 and 3, and that's because God has received him or her. Why should I receive my brother who has different scruples or standards than I? Because God has received them. Look at verses 2 and 3. He says, “For one believeth that he may eat all things,” so first the issue of diet or food, “...another, who is weak, eateth herbs.” The issue was whether or not to eat meat, and these (probably mostly) Jewish believers were still kind of hung up on dietary laws and whether it was okay to eat meat. Verse 3, “Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.” That's the point I want to make. He's actually saying, “Don't judge the other brother or sister because they're eating meat or a certain kind of food or they won't eat certain kinds of food. Don't fight over dietary issues.” Jesus said, “It's not what goes in your mouth that defiles you,” right? You're not more spiritual because you're a vegetarian. You might be more healthy, I don't know, but you're not more spiritual. You're not less spiritual because you have a four-by at In-N-Out or something—animal style—or you eat a steak. “You carnal Christian, eating a hamburger. You call yourself spiritual.” Jesus said, “It's not what goes

in your mouth, it's what comes out of your mouth." Let me explain why. He says what goes in your mouth just passes through, but what comes out has come from your heart. It has come from your heart—from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. These things corrupt a person. So, don't become unloving, judgmental, and critical over dietary laws. Receive your brothers.

The second reason is because God will help him to stand. I love it, verse 4, "Who art thou that judges another man's servant?" He's actually using an illustration, "to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up...", or helped or strengthen up, "...for God is able to make him stand." He shall be held up or straightened out or strengthened. In other words, it's not your job to judge another man's servant. Listen to me very carefully, it's so elementary but we stumble over this. You are God's servant not mine; I am God's servant not yours, so don't judge me and I won't judge you. The Lord is the One who will judge us. Amen? Before the Lord we either stand or we fall, so I shouldn't be judging you because you're serving the Lord. You belong to the Lord, and you're the Lord's servant. Your service to God is between you and God. Who am I to tell you that you're wrong or right? That's what the Bible is saying. In gray areas, areas of liberty, let's not judge others because they belong to God. J.B. Phillips translates verse 4, "God is well able to transform men into servants who are satisfactory." It's not your job to play Holy Spirit, God will take care of that.

The third reason is in verses 5-9. Why should I receive my brother or sister? Because Jesus Christ is Lord. I'm not the Lord. I'm not the boss. I'm not the one calling the shots. Jesus is Lord. Begin with me at verse 5. He says, "One man esteemeth one day above another," he goes from diet, verses 2-3, to talking about days, "...another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. 6 He that regardeth the day, redardeth it unto the Lord." Now, the key phrase from verses 6-9 is "unto the Lord." It's going to be repeated over and over again. So, the focus is that He is Lord. Let's let Him be Lord. "...and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. 7 For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. 8 For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. 9 For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living." The whole focus is your relationship to Jesus as Lord. Go back with me to verse 5. "One man esteemeth one day above another." "Saturday is the Sabbath, and we need to worship on Saturday," and "We have to worship on this day," or "We have to worship on that day," or "We have to observe this new moon, these holy days, and these feast days," and so forth. They were hung up on days. I don't believe God looks at the calendar when you worship or pray. (That was one of the questions I answered on our website that you haven't looked at.) Do Christians have to observe Sabbath? You'd know the question if you had checked it out.

Of all the Ten Commandments, the only one that's not repeated in the New Testament is the Sabbath day. The Bible says in the book of Hebrews that Christ has become our Sabbath. He is our rest—we enter into the rest of Jesus Christ. The early church met on Sunday. It was

called the Lord's day. The day of Pentecost was on Sunday, and the church was born on Sunday. Jesus rose from the dead on Sunday, so we set aside a day. The principle is one day set aside just to give it to God—one day out of seven. You take one day out of your whole week and say, "God, this is a day, just sanctify and set it apart, of worship; a day of looking to You." You don't have to be legalistic about it. Even in Christian churches sometimes people would go to church on Sunday, "We don't watch tv on Sunday. As soon as the sun goes down we can watch tv, and we can't play in the yard. You just have to sit in a chair. You can't break a sweat. You can't move too much, and we can only eat certain foods because it's Sunday." That's legalism. It's not laid out in the Scriptures. To the Galatians and the Colossians and all through the New Testament, Paul deals with those. They say, "Touch not that, and taste not that, and don't handle that." Paul says, "These things are all to perish with the using. The substance is Christ." We need to be strong in the faith and in God's grace and not be hung up on these certain days. If someone wants to make a deal about a day, don't fight over it. Don't debate over it. Don't argue over it. Don't split over it. We have churches that are all based on what day they worship on. "We're Seventh Day Adventist," or "We're Seventh Day Baptist," or "We worship on this day," and "If you worship on another day, you're taking the mark of the beast and you're going to hell and your not of God." They just flip out over stuff like that, and they fight over issues that are nonessential. It breaks the heart of God. You shouldn't do that. You shouldn't be fighting over those things. Jesus is the Lord. We live unto Him.

I love the concept that we're the Lord's. Whether we live, we're the Lord's; whether we die, we're the Lord's. Whether we eat or don't eat, we belong to the Lord. In verse 8 he says, "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's." So we live, we die, we are the Lord's, and we need to just leave it there. Jesus Christ is Lord. We need to be careful that we don't go on what we feel or think but what we know based on Scripture—conviction shaped by the Word of God. The certainty that we shall answer to God rests on the death and the resurrection, verse 9. "For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be the Lord both of the dead and living," the Lordship of Jesus Christ because He died, was buried, and rose from the dead—Jesus Christ is the Lord.

Here's my last and fourth point I want to make about why we should receive one another and not argue and debate over doubtful things. It's in verses 10-12, because we will all give an account to God. Jesus is Lord and we're going to stand before Him and give an account one day to Him. Follow with me beginning at verse 10. "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment," this is the bema, "seat of Christ." Some translations have "of God." "For it is written," he's quoting from Isaiah 45, "As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. 12 So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." Do you know that when we get to heaven I'm not going to be sitting on the throne judging you? You can be really glad. It's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of John Miller. I'm sure glad that you're not going to be judging me! I'm going to stand before Jesus, and before the Lord I'll stand or fall. So, why should we be judging one another?

Don't forget we're not talking about things that are clear, things that we stand on, things that are essentials. I'm not saying that we don't divide, fight, or stand lovingly over the deity of Christ or salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. I'm not saying that. The sad thing in the church today is that we're not fighting over those issues. We're not standing on the truth of God's Word. We've let relativism, pluralism, and these views come into the church where we don't want to take a doctrinal stand. We continue this Sunday on the errors of the false teachers, exposing their character and their conduct. It's so very important. Popular? No, but important. We need to take a stand on truth, but may God help us to be gracious and loving and kind. We're going to talk about exercising our liberty in love and not doing things that may be okay but could cause someone else to be offended or stumble. You say, "Well, I don't care what it does to them. I know it's okay." It may be okay, it may mean that God doesn't condemn it, but if it's offensive to them and stumbles them then it's not loving on our part. We need to have liberty that is controlled by love.

It's like raising little children. Parents, you know when you have little kids, you don't get to do everything you used to want to do and you don't get to leave dangerous items around the house anymore. You don't leave scissors or your loaded shotgun on the counter in the kitchen. You know if you've got kids in the house, everything has to be safety and everything has to be picked up. You don't just say, "I don't care. Let them figure it out! They'll grow up. They'll learn." We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of those who are weak. We ought to give up our liberties for the sake of those who are weaker in the faith. We ought to live under a greater law of conviction because we don't want to offend or cause anyone to be stumbled.

So, they will give an account to God is what Paul is saying in these verses. We will stand before (verse 10) the judgment seat of Christ, not for our sins but for our service. It's called the bema, the reward, seat of Christ. It's like an Olympian who wins the gold medal. They stand on the stand and are given their gold medal. It's a reward seat. We come before Jesus, and He rewards us. What have we done with our time? What have we done with our talent? What have we done with our treasures? How do we live our Christian life? Stop and remember that we will actually give an account to God. He's the One that will judge us not our brother. Jesus tells us, "Don't be critical. Don't be judgmental. Don't be faultfinding. How can you who have a board sticking out of your eye say to someone who has a sliver in their eye, 'let me pull out your sliver' when you have a two-by-four hanging out of your own eye? You hypocrite. First cast the beam from thine own eye, then you can see clearly to pull the twig out of your brother's eye."

Here are some closing thoughts by way of application. Stop judging your brother, receive him. Don't debate, dispute, or argue. Receive one another, and don't get involved in doubtful disputation. Don't be arguing over translations. Don't be arguing over hymns verses worship choruses. Don't be arguing over dancing or music, whether you can bathe publicly or swim, and how you baptize, face forward or face backwards. Don't be arguing over those silly things. Those are the characteristics of a carnal Christian. Secondly, I would say, take inventory of your own actions and your own behavior. If you're being critical of someone else, "Look at that skirt she's wearing. I can't believe that skirt she's wearing! She can't be a Christian wearing that skirt!" It's like Harper Valley PTA or something. We become critical and judgmental and

fault-finding. Let the Holy Spirit work in that person's heart. We want to play Holy Spirit in people's lives. "Hey, come here. I want to talk to you. I'm the Holy Spirit tonight."

When I got saved in 1971, I had long hair and a big ol honkin beard. I mean a big ol burley beard and hair down over my shoulders. It was long before Duck Dynasty. I got saved! I didn't rush right out and get a Christian haircut. I went to work at Campus Crusade for Christ up in Arrowhead Springs. I was a Christian, and I was working. Campus Crusaders, God bless their dear hearts, they had Christian haircuts and Christian shirts and clothes. Woo They looked like Campus Crusaders. You could see them coming down the street. I was working up there and I was as born again as you can, but I remember years later running into some of my friends who worked with me. They said, "John, we never thought you were saved. We were praying, 'O God! Save John Miller. Just help him get the Holy Ghost and get a haircut and get born again, Lord. Let him get saved.'" I thought, "Man, I looked more like Jesus than you did. What's with that?" The church is like, "If you're hippies and you're gonna come into church, they've gotta put shoes on. If hippies are gonna come in the church, they gotta get a haircut." Where does it say that in the Bible? We want to fight over things that aren't essential. You can have your taste and your style—that's fine. Let's not argue that one is more spiritual than the other when the Bible doesn't say that. First say, "Lord, is it I?" First ask yourself, "Am I being critical? Am I being judgmental? Faultfinding? Am I being a legalist?"

The third thing is get busy building up others in the body of Christ. Get your eyes off yourself and get your eyes on being a servant to others. First Corinthians 8:9 says, "But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak." We're going to continue this subject for a couple of weeks and talk about the fact that it's okay for me to do this or that, but if it's going to offend or stumble you, then I won't do that. The reason I'm not going to do that is because I love you, and I don't want to offend you. It's liberty controlled by love. Let's pray.