

But shouldn't we "contend"?

Jude 1:3 *Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. 4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.*

We should hotly contend for the faith, but the objective is to convert the other person to the truth of the Bible, not to feel good over thrashing somebody else. Contention or debate in itself is not the objective, but to teach (assert), maintain, and defend sound doctrine. What this verse teaches and commands is that we must remain firm on the foundation of our Christian faith. Our doctrines are not open for negotiation or dialog, and we cannot sacrifice clear Bible doctrine for the sake of agreement.

The problem falls in two matters: (1) some Christians don't want to defend the truths of God because they are cowards, and (2) other Christians use the defense of the Bible to satisfy their perverse desires to fight and argue, inflating their egos, but neither is biblical.

We should be vigilant that we defend the Christian faith in such a way as to not license and promote debate or arguing for pleasure of arguing. Simply put, there is no excuse for using the work of God to satisfy carnal desires of ventilating your sentiments and for doctrinal boasting over the rest.

What is "contention"?

Phil. 2:14 *Do all things without murmurings and disputings: Tit 3:9 But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.*

ISBE defines contention as the situation where force is applied against force, resistance against resistance in that of belief systems. It is taking a hostile position against another as in a dispute, or

an effort spent on competing. The idea is almost universal of condemning something, as in the form of existing or believing as being rejected by God and the majority of humanity.

A contention is a heated discussion as in debate. It has the idea of strong emotion, and is marked on both sides by fast and loud talking, speaking loudly or yelling, not allowing the person to speak or complete his explanation, and not talking in turn (**1Cor 14:30, 32** "*let the first hold his peace... the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.*"). A contention has wrath and anger associate with it (**Pro 15:18**) and does not accept differences with peace (**Rom 12:18**). In the end, the contentious person does not leave the situation in peace until he is satisfied that he has won what he wanted in the situation.

Pro 13:10 *Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom.*

Contention in itself is the product of arrogance in the person as seen against others. Because of his pride in always being correct, he fights against others even though they may actually believe the same thing. **Contention is a love of defending the "rightness" of one's own self**, without caring for the position and reason why others think what they think or believe what they believe. The contentious only want others to recognize that they are right. Their objective is really not to convince others to the truth, but to convince others that they are right, that "they win."

Ecc 7:8 *Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.*

James 3:14 *But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. 15 This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. 16 For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. 17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. 18 And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.*

What is of God is pure and is of a "meek and quiet spirit" (**1Pe 3:4**), which promotes peace between people. This wisdom of God is something that is peaceable in its character, is kind and full of mercy. What many don't understand is that good doctrine simply is useless if the person teaching it is a bad character model. Because of this God places spiritual requirements on who teaches His Word. It is as if you put good food on a dirty plate. What good is a delicious meal if it is served on a dirty place with stinking stuff, cockroaches, and decaying food bits along side of the good food? So then the character and presentation of the messenger is equally of importance as the content of the message or doctrine being given. One cannot exclude the other. When the talk degenerates into arguing and debate, there will be little eternal gain.

Tit 3:9 *But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain. The form in dealing with something sometimes cancels the good that could be gotten from the treatment given.*

The minister is meek, not contentious

Mat 12:19 *He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets (not raise his voice).*

2Tim 2:24-26 "*servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all men.*" We should be gentle, peaceable, and even in confronting sin and correcting erroneous beliefs and practices, we should always act courteously and friendly, always being tender and with meekness towards others. The servant of God has "longsuffering," putting up with others sins and misunderstandings with eternal patience. We don't accept what is unbiblical, but we love those people anyway. If others think they understand something of God, then it absolutely has to come in God's way.

Jas 3:17 *But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.*

Many passages speak of the requirements of a minister and mention that his character has to be gentle. **1Tim 3:3** “no striker (quick to fight) but patient, not a brawler”. **Titus 1:7** “not soon angry... no striker”. The idea here in Greek is that of always being ready and wanting to fight; quick to use their fists to hit on others. This is a person given to fighting, who loves to fight. He will fight even when there is little reason to fight. He seeks debate and argument when there is no real cause to do so. He is quick to get angry, to be offended, or quick to enter offenses and contention. This type of person is disqualified from the ministry.

The minister is courteous and meek

Gal 6:1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. **2** Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. **3** For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

When a minister takes an arrogant attitude and looks down on others, he has already disqualified himself from the ministry and from any real use to God. It is self-deception, and he does not serve God.

Jas 1:19 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: **20** For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

Titus 3:2 To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men.

What marks the servant of God is his patience and courteous manner in understanding and hearing the opposing position, and his manner of dealing with the person he perceives is in error. He is always calm and patient with others even if they are of other positions or they have lost their calmness. **1Th 5:14** “be patient toward all men.” He is a person who follows **Romans 12:10** “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.” He prefers to give the preference to others before himself. This is

seen by his patience and allowing others to speak and explain their beliefs, to defend themselves, and probe differences without offense.

Phil. 2:3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

1Pe 3:8 Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:

The fight is spiritual

2Co 10:1 Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you: **4** (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) **5** Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

What few understand is that the fight for the truth of God has to be done according to the spirit that God imposes on us just as well as what we believe or practice. The warrior of God has to fight as God directs him (with divine methodology), which is with humility and gentleness, or he has already lost the battle. It is as much the spirit as the logic that wins here. All arrogance, pride, haughtiness, or anything similar totally destroys any good that your efforts or arguments may try to do. You nullify and cancel the power of your argument by your unbiblical form of arguing.

The man of God must not be contentious.

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2Ti 2:24 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, **25** In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; **26** And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

Let's be honest, preachers like to argue about the Bible, and many times, there are brethren in our churches that equally love the biblical debate even though many don't really know what they are arguing about. Thus the flesh easily rises up, and with great joy and pleasure, they single handedly defend the Christian faith. They attack, debate other people, and in the heat of arguing they lose all sight of the spiritual nature of the battle they wage, or the spiritual objective of Christ likeness. Instead of moving the other person to be like Christ, they promote the “antagonizer” character of Satan, contention.