

# Changing the Way You Think

## Church and Culture (Part 5): About Each Other

### Frustrating Setbacks

I am keenly aware of the differing reactions and perspectives within our church around this and other subjects related to the intense global debate of how to appropriately navigate the pandemic's challenges. And while each of us may hold our perspective with passion, I want to gently remind each of you of the principles regarding our attitude and care for one another in which the Holy Spirit leads us:

*Hello Pastor Lee,  
Good email - glad you sent it. I am vaccinated. I wear a mask when and where required...Some wonderful Christian people believe the vaccines are very dangerous, that wearing a mask is more harmful to young children than not wearing a mask. My question is, for those who feel they are being lights in the world, who are leading a fight against wrong or perceived wrong- what is your advice to them?*

### Be Diligent to Preserve the Unity of the Spirit

#### Ephesians 4:1-3

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, **with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.**

### Respect Each Other and Each Other's Opinions

#### Romans 14:1-8; 10, 12-13

Accept other believers who are weak in faith, and don't argue with them about what they think is right or wrong. <sup>2</sup>For instance, one person believes it's all right to eat anything. But another believer with a sensitive conscience will eat only vegetables. <sup>3</sup>Those who feel free to eat anything must not look down on those who don't. And those who don't eat certain foods must not condemn those who do, for God has accepted them. <sup>4</sup>**Who are you to condemn someone else's servants? Their own master will judge whether they stand or fall. And with the Lord's help, they will stand and receive his approval.** <sup>5</sup>In the same way, some think one day is more holy than another day, while others think every day is alike. You should each be fully convinced that whichever day you choose is acceptable. <sup>6</sup>Those who worship the Lord on a special day do it to honor him. Those who eat any kind of food do so to honor the Lord, since they give thanks to God before eating. And those who refuse to eat certain foods also want to please the Lord and give thanks to God. <sup>7</sup>For we don't live for ourselves or die for ourselves. <sup>8</sup>If we live, it's to honor the Lord. And if we die, it's to honor the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.

#### **So why do you condemn another believer? Why do you look down on another believer?**

Yes, each of us will give a personal account to God. <sup>13</sup>**So let's stop condemning each other. Decide instead to live in such a way that you will not cause another believer to stumble and fall.**

- Snide or Sarcastic Remarks
- Rolling Eyes & Condescending Tones
- Critical Spirits

## Give Up Your Preferences, Comforts, & Expediencies for the Sake of Others

### 1 Cor. 10:23-25

"I have the right to do anything," you say—but not everything is beneficial. "I have the right to do anything"—but not everything is constructive. No one should seek their own good, but the good of others.

### Matthew 23:11-12

The greatest among you must be a servant. But those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

## Double-Check Your Motives

- Is Fear Your Motivator?

**2 Timothy 1:7** God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and self-discipline.

### Philippians 4:8

And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.

- Is Your Passion / Perspective **God's Lead** or **Your Cause**
  - Beware of Presumption in Speaking for God
  - Beware of Self Righteous Arrogance & Immaturity

### 2 Timothy 1: 3-7

...Command certain people not to teach...such things **promote controversial speculations rather than advancing God's work**—which is by faith. **The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.** Some have **departed from these and have turned to meaningless talk.** They want to be teachers...but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm.

"Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."

**John 13:35**

Do all things without complaining or arguments; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, <sup>16</sup> holding firmly the word of life...

**Phil. 2:14-16**

August 8, 2021

My Dear Brothers and Sisters of Life Together,

As I write to you, my prayer is that God's face is shining warmly on each of you and your precious families. As you likely know, another state and county mask mandate was issued yesterday to protect against the Delta variant of the Covid virus. Per the wisdom of our Shepherds and leadership team, we will continue to "obey the governing authorities" as we are instructed in Romans 13:1.

This setback is disheartening and inconvenient for everyone. I am keenly aware of the differing reactions and perspectives within our church around this and other subjects related to the intense global debate of how to appropriately navigate the pandemic's challenges. And while each of us may hold our perspective with passion, I want to gently remind each of you of the principles regarding our attitude and care for one another in which the Holy Spirit leads us:

1. Christ's unity survives and even thrives despite our different perspectives when we approach disagreement "with all humility and gentleness, with patience bearing with one another in love, being diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:2-3).
2. In humility, respect each other's opinions even if very different than your own (Romans 14:1-13).
3. Because you love your brothers and sisters, you are willing to give up your rights of convenience, expediency, and preference for their sake. That's what it means to be "servant of all" and to "put others needs before your own" (Matt. 23:11; Phil. 2:1-4).

**You may be thinking, thanks Pastor Lee, but why the sermonette?** Well, we all are weary of the challenges of these past eighteen months...and now going backwards can't help but feed our frustrations and fears. Frustration and fears can cause us to be short, irritable, argumentative, and have a critical spirit of others – even those we love. So, I remind you of these things so that you may be on guard, and remember you are called to "have the same attitude as Christ" and empty yourself for others (Phil. 2:5-13). It is important that you not only refrain from complaining and arguments, but that you also focus your mind and your thought-life on the things of the Spirit – things eternally true, honorable, right, commendable, excellent, and worthy of praise (Phil. 4:8).

The world is watching, and in these times how we talk and treat each other (John 13:35), and our witness is on display for either the glory of God or the immature demands of Self. So I ask you, regardless of your individual frustrations and perspectives, let humility and servant-heartedness be evident in our times together, and in your prayers for one another, our nation and her leaders, and the world. I leave you with this passage of encouragement and challenge we unpacked weeks ago together:

*Do all things without complaining or arguments; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world,<sup>16</sup> holding firmly the word of life ...*

**Phil. 2:14-16**

Much Love and Hope,

Pastor Lee