

ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS OUTSIDERS MOST OFTEN ASK US

Part II: Answering The Five Questions Believers Most Often Ask Us

E. Answering The Question About Debatable Issues That Are Not Named In Scripture

I. Introduction

- A. Though many people have many questions about our Christian faith, we have noticed over the years ten questions that people outside of our Church *most often* ask us, and 1 Peter 3:15 calls us to **answer** them.
- B. Five of the questions come from unbelievers, and five from believers, so we answer them in this lesson series, and I am indebted to Josh McDowell, A Ready Defense, 1991, p. 405-424 for the format of the lessons.

II. Answering The Question About Debatable Issues That Are Not Named In Scripture.

- A. We state this question as follows: "A number of issues in today's era are debated by Christians, but the Bible does not specifically name them, so how are we to know what is the right stand to have on each of them?"
- B. To answer this question, we view the Apostle Paul's 1 Corinthians 6:12 directives on such issues (as follows):
 1. The Principle Of Edification, 1 Corinthians 6:12a:
 - a. In this passage, Paul was indicating that a believer is technically free to pursue any direction in life that is not expressly forbidden in Scripture, a truth that he also asserted in Romans 14:14a.
 - b. However, one **cannot** exercise his liberty to pursue that direction if doing so "is not expedient" (KJV), with the word "expedient" being the translation of the Greek verb *sumphero* that means "advantageous, helpful, useful," Arndt & Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, 1967, p. 787-788.
 - c. Thus, one's liberty to pursue a direction in life must be limited to his finding that direction advantageous, helpful or useful in his personal walk with the Lord.
 - d. However, he must also watch how exercising that liberty affects others. In 1 Corinthians 8:1-13, Paul addressed the issue of eating meat that had been offered to idols and later sold in the meat market: (1) on the one hand, an idol is nothing (1 Cor. 8:4), so a believer is free to eat such meat (1 Cor. 8:8). (2) Yet, not every Christian has this knowledge, so an ignorant believer's eating such meat wounds his conscience as he views the act as an act of worship to the idol to which the meat had been offered (1 Cor. 8:7). (3) Paul refused to eat such meat **IF** it offended an onlooking, weak believer, 1 Cor. 8:13 with 1 Cor. 10:23-33.
 2. The Principle Of Mastery, 1 Corinthians 6:12b:
 - a. The latter part of 1 Corinthians 6:12 KJV indicates a believer is technically free to pursue any direction in life that is not expressly forbidden by Scripture, but **only** if he is "not brought under the power of any."
 - b. That KJV phrase translates the verb *exousiazō*, that means "to have the right, the power for something," and in the passive voice as it appears in this verse, it means "to be mastered by" anything, *Ibid.*, p. 278.
 - c. In other words, the believer is technically free to pursue any direction in life not expressly forbidden by Scripture **only** if he does not lose control of his thinking or behavior to an outside influence that is contrary to God and to God's will for him.
- C. We can apply these principles to some important sample issues that Christians debate today (as follows):
 1. The Issue Of Cremation For Believers: (a) Some Christians hold it is wrong to cremate a believer's dead body since it has been and will yet be the temple of the Holy Spirit, 1 Cor. 6:19-20. (b) However, since some believers have had to be buried at sea where fishes doubtless destroy the body soon after it enters the water, there is technically no sin in how a body is disposed. (c) However, one must be careful to consider the consciences of others in how he disposes of a body. (d) On the other hand, funeral costs may make a regular burial impossible for some survivors, leaving no option but cremation regardless of the objections of onlooking "weak" believers. One must thus weigh the pros and the cons and make the best decision!
 2. The Issue Of Observing Sundays, Christmas And Easter: (a) Some do not observe Christmas since it began as a Roman Catholic ("Christ" + "Mass") day, some do not observe Easter since it is pagan in origin and some see observing Sundays as a false, legalistic substitute for the Sabbath law. (b) Others view these days as having become so modified in meaning by western civilization that to observe them actually helps one's testimony as a Protestant believer. (c) Nepaug Bible Church, with the vast majority of believers, is in this latter group, so we honor these days to promote our testimony while respecting those who disagree.

Lesson: *On debatable issues not named in Scripture, we have liberty, but only for edifying and remaining free of being mastered by anything other than the Lord Himself.*

Application: *May we exercise our liberty, but only if it edifies and keeps us free of being mastered by false masters.*