

I watched a video a while ago that has stuck with me. A conservative man was talking to a college student about a heated political topic. After debating the topic back and forth for a while, the student expressed that he didn't feel safe. The conservative man then said something to the effect that no one was going to shoot or hurt him and that he was completely safe. It was clear to me that the student was not saying he felt unsafe because he thought someone would shoot him but because the energy in the room and from the one he was speaking to was intense. He may have been experiencing cognitive dissonance as well. Well long story short, the debate ended like you would expect. Neither changed their view. They both likely thought they were defending the truth and they left that encounter more divided than before.

A way the conservative man could have de-escalated the situation is by saying, "Ya, this is a pretty intense conversation isn't it? Thank you for having the courage to engage with me." Instead the conservative began to imply that this student was stupid for feeling this way. No one was going to shoot or hurt him! This conservative completely missed an opportunity to connect with this student's heart. Instead his logical response alienated him and encouraged this student to sink deeper into Lizard brain. By how he proceeded, he ruined any chance he would've had of persuading the student.

I perceive a lot of people here want to defend what's good and right. The way we go about that will greatly impact our results. How we proceed must be as noble as the cause we seek. How we go about defending truth is just as important as defending the truth. How can we become of one heart if we only communicate using our brains and logic?

Our current political culture is so divisive and continually stirs people up to anger against the other side. Do we really want to pattern ourselves after that? Is the debate stage really a great way to encourage respectful disagreement? What results do we want? Our examples of how to stand for truth are terrible. People on both sides of the political aisle think they are standing for truth and justice though blind they may be.

I think there is a better way to resolve our current differences than the tool of debating, even respectful debate. In order to explain the better way I see, I'm going to tell you about a dispute I had and how I messed up. Then I will tell you what I learned and how I would proceed differently if I were to do it again.

My dispute was with some people who I was fellowshiping with at one point. I had read some scriptures about the way we were supposed to be doing the sacrament. I cared a lot about making sure the ordinance was kept with exactness. I remembered the scripture that says,

"The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof, because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant." Isaiah 7:1.

I was very concerned and this continued to weigh on my heart. This was extremely important to me. When I brought it up to my fellowship, it quickly became apparent that many of them had a different viewpoint. They found reasoning in scriptures that made them believe there wasn't a

problem with the way we were doing it. My brain could not understand how they could think this. Their reasoning made no sense to me. I thought the scriptures plainly say this so how could they dismiss it? One of the people from the fellowship wanted to understand where I was coming from. He made the time to sit down and talk. We tried to reason it through respectfully but we still didn't agree. There was also a part of me that felt I needed to convince them. I wanted to work through it with them and come to the truth. I felt uncomfortable not participating in the sacrament, but I also felt uncomfortable participating because I wanted to do it right. There was a part of me that didn't know if I was 100% right and this caused me to seek validation outside of the fellowship. I talked with a few others about my concerns. I didn't know what to do. I had plenty of scriptures I could rebuttal their arguments with and we did go back and forth with different ideas. The result in my heart through this process was that I became divided in my heart. Even though we were all trying our best to be respectful, it still produced negative feelings in me towards them. I found that I felt distant and like we were adversaries. Even though I did my best to be respectful in the moment, I was not respectful towards them while talking with those who agreed with me in private. I thought they were foolish and made no sense. I've had a long time to think about this experience. T&C 157:54 says,

“Study to learn how to respect your brothers and sisters and to come together by precept, reason, and persuasion, rather than sharply disputing and wrongly condemning each other, causing anger. Take care how you invoke my name. Mankind has been controlled by the adversary through anger and jealousy, which has led to bloodshed and the misery of many souls. Even strong disagreements should not provoke anger, nor to invoke my name in vain as if I had part in your every dispute. Pray together in humility and together meekly present your dispute to me, and if you are contrite before me, I will tell you my part.”

I used the scriptures to dispute the sacrament. Isn't this invoking God's name as if he had part in my dispute? Was I not stirred up to anger which led me to talk poorly in private of my fellow friends and view them as adversaries and opponents? I did all of this while honestly and sincerely trying to make sure the ordinances were kept in tact. Here is what I would have done if I could do it over again.

I would have brought my concerns to my fellowship. Then they would have said their perspective and it would be made clear to me that they saw it differently just as before. I would then suggest that we take all of our perspectives to the Lord. We would pray together in humility and together meekly present our dispute to the Lord. We would express that we want to do things correctly and be faithful to his commandments. We understand the scriptures differently and would like to know what he meant by what he said. We would ask him to help us all get an answer in a way we could understand. I would tell my fellowship that I feel uncomfortable taking the sacrament with them at this time because of my view of scripture. However, I don't always get everything right so let's continue to petition the Lord until we get an answer. This is how I would respectfully disagree. Let us let the Lord reason with us by petitioning him together about our difficult and complex issues.

I would like to apply these concepts to this women's conference. It seems to me that there are disagreements as to what home fellowship means, what daily walk means, and how ambiguous or not ambiguous the Lord's instructions are. I suggest we take all of this to the Lord. We can ask him what he meant by what he said. Are all of our understandings of his instructions acceptable to him or not? This would settle the dispute about what the instructions from the Lord mean.