



Avoid Controversy

In Titus 3:9 – 11, as Paul comes to the end of his letter he has one final and important warning for Titus, whose assignment is to set things in order in the churches on Crete.

Don't Argue

Titus is warned to “avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law.” The mention of genealogies and strivings about the law is no doubt a reference to those whose tendency was to harp back to the old Jewish ways: the troublemakers Paul wrote about in the second half of chapter 1. The kind of debate people like that stir up is one example of the sort of foolish dispute Titus was to avoid but what Paul had in mind here is broader in scope. The word he used for dispute could equally be translated question, enquiry, debate or controversy.



It is not all dispute that was to be avoided; only foolish dispute. Is there a kind of questioning, debate or even controversy that is not foolish but profitable and useful?

If so, how can we distinguish foolish dispute from debate or controversy that may be useful?

What are some of the foolish disputes you are aware of in churches today?

No doubt Paul's intention was that Titus should never be the instigator of any foolish controversy in the churches but perhaps he also had in mind the fact that when there are within a church those who are of a mind to stir things up it can be very difficult to avoid being drawn into debate with them.



Why are we so easily drawn into dispute with others?

What can you do to avoid being drawn in?

Titus was to avoid foolish dispute because it is unprofitable and useless. Paul's choice of words stands in contrast with the words good and profitable in verse 8. No doubt the choice was deliberate; it highlights what has been the major theme of the letter. Paul's intention was that Titus should move the Cretan churches

away from idle talk toward good works: godliness of life and faithful service in the community. When a church becomes focussed on debate and controversy it can become a major distraction from those things that ought to take priority.

What To Do

But what do you do with a contentious or divisive person without being drawn into debate with him. Paul had the answer. He told Titus to “reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition.” It is worth giving a little thought to how that might be worked out in practice.



How would you distinguish between a man who is divisive and someone who is genuinely confused?

Practically speaking, what does “reject” mean?

What would a proper admonition entail?

According to Paul a divisive person must be rejected because “such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.”



It what sense are divisive people “self-condemned?”