

## **APRIL 30 2006—LIVING WITH OUR DIFFERENCES**

### **II Peter 2:1-10**

Today we want to look at LIVING WITH OUR DIFFERENCES.  
 Our world today is filled with options and choices,  
 From breads to beauty aids  
 from roughage to religions.  
 And you can be killed if you disagree.

How can Christian stand on different sides of hot issues  
 and still be civil and loving to one another.  
 Peter address this issued in the book of 2 Peter,  
 As one of the greatest problem the early church faced  
 And with Peter we will discover that the danger is not from without, but from within.

In JRR Tolkiens book and the later movie the Lord of the Rings  
 Frodo the ring bearer had a special task!  
 Was he called to destroy the ring?  
 Was he called to unify the nations?  
 Or was he called to save the world?  
 It was important for Frodo to destroy the ring.  
 But the essentials for Frodo to remember was that he was saving the world.  
 That was THE FORCE that drove him forward until he completed his mission

For the church and for Christians  
 Knowing our main issues and call is very important.  
 With so many wrong choices  
 And wrong priorities.  
 What can we do to stay effective and still reach the world for Christ.  
 First We must face reality.  
 WE LIVE IN AN

### **I. AGGRESSIVE WORLD, WE COULD SAY --HOSTILE.**

**II Peter 2:1 But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves.**

The early church faced false prophets,  
 who sought to destroy the truth and  
 And weaken the fellowship in early church.

But notice where these prophets were located in vs. 1  
**They were among the people.**  
 The enemies of the church are not outside but inside the church.

Have you ever eaten an apple  
 And when you took a bite out of it.  
 You looked at what was left in your hand it was half a worm.

That is not cute worm either.

You had looked at that apple  
 you didn't see any hole or spot  
 Where did that worm come from?  
 That was the perfect deception.

Apple growers tell us that some worms don't  
 Bore a hole in from the outside.  
 They lay their eggs on the blossoms before the apple even begins to form.  
 Then when they hatch they're already inside the apple.  
 And they eat their way into adulthood.  
 And they eventually eat their way out of the apple and  
 that's where the wormholes come from.

It happens in a church as well.  
 Satan can lay a deceptive egg of destruction inside the church.  
 Where false teachers and false prophets do their dirty work.  
 Peter writes. II Peter 2

**Vs. 1 They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. VS 2 Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute.**

The conflicting issues for the early church were  
 Whether to eat meat that was sacrificed to Idols.  
 Whether to eat on the Sabbath without washing your hands.  
 Whether to help an animal that has fallen in a well on the sabbath.  
 women should be in the front or back of the synagogue and  
 Have their heads covered or uncovered in public.  
 Arian came to the council on Nicea in 325 ad  
 Saying that Jesus was created by God,  
 And that the spirit and flesh were separate entities.  
 And you could marry your mother in law or sister in law.  
 Didn't matter. And add to that the issue of prostitution  
 in the pagan churches affecting the early Christians.

The issues of today in our churches are just as complex.  
 The issue of female ordination,  
 homosexual orientation,  
 same sex marriages,  
 abortion on demand,  
 worship styles, and music,  
 Social drinking,  
 We fight over whether we should laugh or be stoic,  
 clap in the service or be reverent in silence.  
 We debate the dress codes for guest singers-- short dresses, tight genes or tattoos.  
 Some want perfume free sanctuary.

Others claim the authorized KJV is the true Bible.  
Should we dedicate or Baptize dunk or sprinkle  
On and ON ad-infinitum ad-nausea

Satan is just happy to sow the seeds of disunity and corruption.  
He sets families against families  
Husband against wives.  
Were not too smart at time.

**A husband and wife were getting ready for bed.**  
**The wife was standing in front of a full-length mirror taking a hard look at herself.**  
She says: "You know, love, I look in the mirror and I see an old woman. My face is all wrinkled, my chest sags to my waist, my legs and arms are all flabby. She turns to her husband and says, "Tell me something positive to make me feel better about myself." He thinks and then says in a very soft voice, "Well there's nothing wrong with your eyes."

We all have one thing in common.  
We can be very near sighted. Or short sighted.  
And in that we can start some of the biggest fights.  
Of Christians against other Christian  
And we loose the main focus and purpose.  
So what are we today?  
Worms or seeds inside the apple?

**Matthew 24:24; <sup>24</sup>For false Christ's and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible.**

**We live in a hostile world.**

The second key of success is

## **II. WE STAY ALERT AND FOCUSED**

AS WE HOLD TO THE TRUTH.

**Acts 20:29,39; I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. <sup>30</sup>Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. <sup>31</sup>So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.**

The goal of false prophet is to distort the truth.  
That Jesus isn't really Lord and the Bible isn't God's word.  
But the goal of a Christian is to  
guard the truth  
speak the truth.  
Live the truth.

**Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. II Timothy 2:15**

In the issues of our day,  
Satan loves to deal in half-truth and false truth.  
His plan is not to destroy truth but just distort it.

**Galatians 1:6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel... which is really no gospel at all. Galatians 1:6-7a**

**Then he gives a warning:**

**If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned! Galatians 1:9**

Satan seek disruption and confusion.

He doesn't want

unity in the body of Christ.

Unity in our purpose

Unity in our accomplishments.

**In one of the peanuts cartoons,**

Lucy is terribly frightened because it has been raining and raining and raining. She begins to wonder aloud if there might be a repeat of Noah's flood. But Charlie Brown reassures her. He tells her about God's promise and the meaning of rainbows and the covenant. Lucy, much relieved, said: "Thanks Charlie Brown, you've take a load off my mind." To which Charlie Brown replies. "Good theology has a way of doing that."

**Pauls writes to Timothy 4:16 Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.**

**Too many Christians believe that if we don't get involved and leave things alone it will be ok.**

Not true.

A white Post left white and left alone

Will need to be repainted every year.

I submit to you that if we want to see our children, and our grand children be the kind of salt that can keep our nation a godly nation, then we must draw very distinct lines in the sand regarding what does and what does not constitute Christian fellowship and doctrine.

John Wesley said it this way:

In Essentials ---faithfulness (fidelity)

In non-essentials – Freedom –(Liberty)

In all things—Love –(Charity)

Let me close by sharing some practical help

As we deal with differences in the issues of life.

**III. KEEP THE MAIN THING THE MAIN THING.**

Paul writes **This is my prayer : that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ , filled with the fruit of righteousness that come through Jesus Christ--- to the glory and praise of God. Philippians 1:9-11**

Knowledge and truth come by the Holy Spirit.  
And we must discern what is essential and what is simply opinion or preference.

When the early church began to face diversity and conflict  
They met together in the great councils.  
And we are blessed today to have their results  
In the Apostles creed, the Nicene creed.  
And out of those creeds were developed the Articles of our Faith.  
In which we have 12 vital points of doctrine.  
These are the essentials of our faith.

The temptation is to compromise the essentials to keep up with the rest of secular society.

### **1. Essentials**

These are those truths that come out of the heart of God.  
Biblically certain by revelation  
Not influenced by culture  
Not influenced by personal opinion

Tested in the love of God.  
Placed in the word of God.  
Given to the people of God.

Central to the Christian life.  
These are like the 10 commandments.  
Beatitudes  
Sermon on the mount.  
Scriptures of the Old and New Testament.

**Essentials are the** non-negotiable in our Christian life and theology.  
When they are broken or bent  
their affect in the Christian world is enormous.

These include the Virgin birth, Divinity of Jesus, the atonement, crucifixion, the Holy Spirit, the authority of the Bible, Salvation by grace, return of Christ and Judgment.

That why there is such an uproar right now about  
The documentary on the **Judas Gospel**.  
A twist of Scripture and mockery of Jesus intent.  
Or that's why the book and movie the **DeVinci code**  
Have become so controversial.  
That Jesus was totally created human and was married, and had a child.  
Friends it is a book of fiction  
A fast thriller but totally untrue.

Essentials are not influenced by culture, conviction or personal opinion.  
Based on the word of God.

Paul said of the early church (**Galatians 1:6ff**) **“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—**

**“Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ...that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel . . .”** **Philippians 1:27**

Paul was surprised the early church wasn't using the truth the Bible clearly teaches  
**Homer and Emmy Lou were courting on the front porch swing.**

Homer was in love with Emmy Lou, but he was shy and had difficulty mustering up the courage to express his love. Aware of this he said: Emmy Lou, if I had a thousand eyes, they would all be looking at you. Emmy Lou if I had a thousand arms they would all be hugging you. Emmy Lou if I had a thousand lips they would all be kissing you. Emmy Lou looked at Homer and said: “Homer stop complaining about what you don't have and start using what you do have.

Essentials are time tested truth  
over 3000 years of Judeo Christian Tradition and history.  
And to distort or twist or bend these essentials to fit our will or culture,  
Will bring great ruin to ourselves and our country.  
What are the Biblical essentials of your faith that you will not give up, compromise, surrender, concede or negotiate?

**2. Convictions--** are those beliefs we choose as personal practices  
Not biblically certain.  
Strongly influenced by culture  
And influenced by personal experiences.

These issues include entertainment choices,  
personal habits,  
the use of alcohol  
and how we “keep the Sabbath holy.”  
Whether we are Pro-choice or pro-life  
Same sex lifestyle  
Your political choices democrat or republican  
All can be argued by our convictions

Some people build their conviction on what Jesus did not say.  
Rather on what he did say.  
I hear people say well Jesus never mentioned homosexuality in the bible  
or specifically forbade same sex marriage.

If we argue these issue in the light of conviction alone  
We will be arguing forever.  
The Bible says that Jesus recognized Sexual relationship  
are only permitted in a marriage bond

between a man and a woman who has become one flesh.  
 All other sexual relationships outside that are abominations.  
 Including sex before marriage,  
 Including living together without marriage  
 Including teen promiscuity.  
 Sinful against a holy God.

**Our Convictions have been responsible for creating all the denominations.**

**Adult versus Infant baptism.**

**immersion or sprinkling. Both are mentioned in the bible.**

These things are influenced by culture, and affected by personal experiences.

Dr. Edgar Dewitt Jones gave the invitation at the end of a revival and a huge man came forward. Big tears were streaming down his cheeks. He said: “Preacher, you said tonight that God could save anybody, no matter who they are or what they’ve done. I want to believe that and be saved, but I want you to know I’ve done everything. I’ve broken all of the Ten Commandments, I’m a terrible sinner, and I am a Swedish blacksmith by trade. Can God help me or not?”

Dr. Jones took his massive hand, looked deep into that eager face and said to him. “Sir you are in luck. God is specializing in Swedish blacksmiths tonight.

He could say it out of a conviction.

But he could say it out of the Essentials of Gods Word.

**Jesus has come to seek and to save the Lost.**

Lets not use our own conviction to measure someone else spirituality.

**C. Preferences—**

Not biblically certain

Somewhat influenced by culture

And strongly influence by personal opinion.

They are something you discover and accept, as part of your habit or lifestyle.

The color of the carpet.

Kinds of music.

Style of worship.

Contemporary vs. traditional music.

**Preferences and Opinions** are those beliefs we personally think are best for us and our families.

They are usually not led by the Holy Spirit

Think about it.

**Christian people can come to different conclusion about Convictions and preferences**

**But not about essentials.**

**These are** not debatable.

For instance: It is **essential**—a biblically based principle that we are to be in worship every week with one another.

Your **Conviction** might be that you worship in a Methodist, Baptist or Lutheran church.  
But you are in worship.

A **Preference** would be that you worship in Contemporary service or traditional.

If you like to fight about the things that are merely convictions and preferences,  
then my advice to you is that you find another church.

We are called to hate the sin and love the sinner.

What we are interested in is establishing and maintaining  
the **essentials** of our Christian faith and heritage.

Those things that Jesus said were important

That we need to remember as we meet together

In love of one another.

In that way we will keep what is essentials-- essential

And work together

Agreeing to love and be loved

As we become fully devoted followers of our Lord Jesus Christ  
who serves him willingly and well.

That is our main task at FUMC.