

PLAIN SPEECH

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“Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech” (2 Cor. 3:12)

By Scott Parker

“CALL U-HAUL ETHEL, I ASKED THE WRONG QUESTIONS”

Any saint who’s been dry (out of baptismal water) for even a short time – if they have been diligent not to neglect spiritual growth (2 Tim. 2:15; 2 Pet. 1:5ff; 1 Pet. 2:2; Js. 1:21) – understands that true unity is arrived at via doctrinal agreement (Jn. 17:20-21; 1 Cor. 1:10; 3:3; 4:17; 2 Cor. 13:11; Gal 1:9; Plp. 1:27; 2:1-2; 3:16; et al).

Also, any “diligent dry body” ought to understand that local churches are precious (1 Tim. 3:15). They also ought to understand that local churches, if not properly tended to, are susceptible to error (Acts 20:17-32; Rev. 2:12-16). Thus, any careful student of scripture knows that asking questions and calling for answers is the way to keep both the local church and individuals in the favor of God (1 John 4:1; 1 Pet. 3:15; 1 Thess. 5:21).

However, experience has taught me many folks who call themselves Christians certainly don’t like to be questioned.

Let’s illustrate. Let’s call the preacher Elmer. For the last six months he has been trying to set things in order (Titus 1:5) at “ABC church of Christ.” His efforts are opposed by the congregation’s two “elders” on many levels.

The two self-indulgent “shepherds” {who obviously do not tremble in view of Ez. 34:1-2} are named Chuck and Duck. They are tired of Elmer’s pointed lessons and finally sit down with him for a talk. During the meeting with the “elders,” Elmer is chastised for his long sermons. The “elders” also “get on to him” for direct messages. “*We don’t want to offend our visitors and denominational friends,*” Chuck and Duck exclaim. Elmer is also castigated for his stand on various issues. Finally, the Diotrephian elder asks, “*Elmer, Do you have any questions?*” Elmer proceeds to pose the following queries:

1. “*What scripture allows for a local church to be connected, in any way, to unauthorized practices?*”
2. “*On what basis may a local church be connected, in any way, to false teachers? Please give me the Scriptures.*”
3. “*Can you please scripturally explain why you will not allow men who teach error to preach a gospel meeting here, while allowing those same men to teach in the building each week via their tracts in the tract rack?*”
4. “*Why did you say you opposed individually funded missionary societies when I came here, but have condemned me for preaching against them while one of their advocates was in the audience? Did you lie to me or do you just fear men?*”
5. “*Where is the passage that authorizes us to call denominationalists friends?*”
6. “*What takes precedence: adding on to the building or feeding the flock and guarding from wolves?*”
7. “*Would you have complained to the apostle Paul about long preaching?*”
8. “*Why can’t you see that it’s just as wrong to preach false doctrine as it is to sing the same?*”
9. “*Is there a passage that states elders are to give those who choose to work during assembly times a pass?*”
10. To Diotrephes – “*I’m confused, are you in support of mental divorce and those who teach such or not?*”
11. To Diotrephes – “*Is Weldon Warnock or any other man the authority for Christianity?*”
12. “*Where is the passage that states the only condemnable issues are first principles?*”
13. “*Read Jer. 15:17 and tell me if you will condemn him as a “binder,” or as one who practiced “phone-booth religion?!”*”

Now what will Elmer say to his wife, Ethel, when he gets back to their house? Read the title again.

Do not miss the point. **Elmer actually asked all the right questions.** Keep going Elmers!

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58).