

Dear Friend,

Thank you for sending me your theological questions. I send this paper to everyone who asks me to answer any theological question.

I have written this short paper because I LOVE to see God's people seek God's Truth through God's Word. It always THRILLS me to see a Christian taking the initiative to study God's Word for themselves.

I have also written this paper so that we can greatly ENJOY studying God's Word together. Thus, I ask if you would please be willing to process through a few minimal expectations with me about our study together.

Could we please agree that:

**1. Everything is based on God's Word.**

- a. **Let's Study Together**
- b. **Major Violations vs. Different "Emphasis" or "Weight" of subjects.**
- c. **We ALL have to CONSTANTLY be aware of the need to filter out "Traditions" versus God's Word**

**2. That we are both "Learners" and that it is OK for both of us to "Not Know" an answer or to "Not be Sure or Certain" of an answer.**

**3. That we will set our hearts to bless each other with peace even though we may not wind up agreeing upon every point.**

I have some expansions below to these requests.

**1. Let's agree that Everything is based on God's Word.**

**A. Let's Study Together**

I won't have lengthy discussions with any person on any theological issue if that person is not willing to do some serious study of God's Word on their own.

Because I am so passionate about study of God's word, there are often specific sermons or whole series where I have already done an in-depth study of this subject. Thus, at the beginning of a dialogue, I may ask the person to please listen to a few of my sermons. This allows for three big positive things to happen.

- a. It allows the person to know my thoughts in detail.
- b. It allows the person to investigate and assess how well and carefully I handle God's Word
- c. It allows me to see that this person is a serious student of God's Word who is willing to do study on their own.

**B. Major Violations vs. Different Emphasis or Weight of subjects.**

**1. A Major Violation of God's Word**

would be something like denying the foundational truths of Christianity like salvation by faith in the shed blood of Jesus alone. Another example would be a Christian who thinks it's OK to have sex outside of marriage.

When someone operates in what I feel is a major violation of God's Word, I am not able to be a close friend to that person.

However, separate from a major violation of God's Word is when we disagree on the

## **2. Emphasis or Weight of a subject in God's Word.**

In this situation, there are subject such as

- How often should a Christian celebrate communion
- Water Baptism by dunking or sprinkling etc.

In situations where there is a difference of what "Weight" or "Emphasis" this subject is given in God's Word, I can disagree with someone and still maintain a very close friendship.

Having given this grace, I do want to add that finding the correct "Weight" of "Emphasis" in God's Word is very important to me personally. I feel that it is the key to Rightly Dividing the Word of God. Here are a few scriptures that speak to this subject.

### II Timothy 2:15

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.

### Mark 12:33

To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is **more important** than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

### Matthew 23:23

But you have neglected the **more important** matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You **strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.**

## **C. We ALL have to CONSTANTLY be aware of the need to filter out "Traditions" versus God's Word**

At Liberty Church, we have many people who come from many different denominational backgrounds.

We ALL need a constant awareness that many times each of us has believed many things we simply because other's whom we trusted believed them. Every group of sincere Christians will have some traditions that contradict the Word of God.

If you **don't** believe that your particular group has **any** areas of tradition and that **every** habit and practice they have is solely and purely based on God's Word....., then this helps me to understand that I probably would not want to do a scripture study with you.

It is because of this need in my own life that I so greatly welcome Theological Questions. I have had hundreds of times that someone else helped me to see God's Word more clearly through a discussion like this.

Jesus had a lot to say on this subject.

### Mark 7

<sup>1</sup>The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus and <sup>2</sup>saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were "unclean," that is, unwashed. <sup>3</sup>(The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. <sup>4</sup>When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.)

<sup>5</sup>So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, "**Why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders** instead of eating their food with 'unclean' hands?"

<sup>6</sup>He replied, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: "

**'These people honor me with their lips,  
but their hearts are far from me.**

**<sup>7</sup>They worship me in vain;  
their teachings are but rules taught by men.'**

**<sup>8</sup>You have let go of the commands of God and  
are holding on to the traditions of men."**

<sup>9</sup>And he said to them: "You have a fine way of **setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!** <sup>10</sup>For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' <sup>11</sup>But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corban' (that is, a gift devoted to God), <sup>12</sup>then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother. <sup>13</sup>**Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition** that you have handed down. And you do many things like that."

I was raised in the Roman Catholic faith. Although I was not a Christian and rarely attended church, I have had to be careful to spend many years sorting out what I believed according to God's Word and not according to what I had always been told.

My wife grew up on the Lutheran faith. My wife had to do some serious study of God's word to understand that the Bible is very clear that Baptism is for believers. The origins of infant baptism are more connected to infant dedication (Such as Hannah did with Samuel) than they are to water baptism. I am very proud of the fact that my wife (when we were still dating) took the time to search this out on her own before she made the decision to be water baptized as a believer.

I have been a Pastor in the Charismatic / Pentecostal / Spirit Filled part of the Body of Christ for 24 years. I have found hundreds of traditions in this wonderful section of the Body of Christ that differ

with scripture in emphasis. In each case, my goal in sorting out tradition vs. Bible is simply to serve my Lord Jesus humbly and with a clean heart. It is not my job to “*Straighten Out*” the whole body of Christ. My job is to teach God’s Word to our people as clearly as I can as God’s Word.

**2. Let’s agree that we are both “Learners” and that it is OK for both of us to “Not Know” an answer or to “Not be Sure or Certain” of an answer.**

There are many questions where I will honestly answer that I “*Don’t Know*”. Please don’t misunderstand this response to mean that I have not studied this subject. In many cases I have spent years and hundreds of hours studying what the Bible says on this subject.

Also, please don’t misunderstand my response to mean that I don’t care. I do care deeply. It is just that it is very important to me to NOT violate God’s Word. Thus, if I am not sure, I am very comfortable saying so.

I can generally give a brief summation of my thoughts on any subject. I can also give a guess as to how sure I am on these subjects. For instance, here are three examples of subjects about which I have done a lot of study. Next to each subject below is my estimate on how sure I am on my conclusions.

- **Women in Leadership in the Body of Christ 60-70%**
- **End times Pre-Trib versus Post Trib 10%**
- **Predestination versus Free Will 60-70%**

It is very possible that your questions will help me increase my clarity and certainty of what God’s Word says in a subject such as this.

**3. That we will set our hearts to bless each other with peace even though we may not wind up agreeing upon every point.**

I personally believe that it is a very sweet thing to Jesus when His children seek him in ways that are dominated by kindness and graciousness.

Thank you so much for giving me the gift of reading this paper. If you are comfortable with these requests, then I would love to go further in this discussion with you.

Many Blessings,  
PJ