**Useless Fights**

Titus 3:9 (Cyclical Inductive)

**Topic:**  Wisdom

**Subject:** How should young pastors avoid arguments with “long stayers” in church?

**Complement:** Avoid useless man-focused debates and legalistic arguments.

**Purpose:** Audience to avoid man-focused debates and legalistic arguments.

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| **Intro** | |
| 1. Arouse interest by shock | * Being a pastor is like death by a thousand paper cuts.   You're scrutinized and criticized from top to bottom, stem to stern.[[1]](#footnote-1)  so says Rev Dr Ken Fong[[2]](#footnote-2), senior pastor of Evergreen Baptist Church and adjunct faculty at Fuller Theological, who has written extensively about leadership and Asian-American ministries   * In fact, a Forbes article lists the pastorate as one of the toughest leadership roles   alongside being a corporate CEO, Congressman and newspaper editor |
| 2. Raise need | * Clearly, we have a tough road ahead. * This is especially true for us entering churches as new or young pastors,   more so, if you are entering a church that has been around for a long time. |
| 3. Subject restatement | * How can new pastors make a positive impact? * How should we avoid arguments with people who have been in the church for a long time? |
| 4. Background | * Thankfully, we are not the first ones to encounter this situation,   Titus encountered this situation too.   * Titus, whom Paul calls his spiritual son and faithful co-worker,   was not from Crete  but was left there by Paul to establish Church governance and ordain elders.   * The Cretan church was probably started soon after Pentecost   for it was recorded that men of Crete were present at Pentecost  and telling the mighty works of God in their own language.   * Despite being around for a while, the church was not very organized in terms of leadership,   which possibly contributed to the doctrinal issues facing the church,  and what Titus had to deal with. |
| 5. Preview  Passage | * Let us open our Bibles to Titus 3:9, and see the two pieces of advice the apostle Paul gave to the young pastor, Titus. * Let me read for us, Titus chapter 3 verse 9. |
| **MP I : Avoid extended man-focused discussions (3:9a-b).** | |
| R  Explanation | * In both the ESV and NIV, the 1st part of the verse indicates “But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies” * Mounce’s Reverse Interlinear translates the “avoid” slightly differently with the use of the word “shun” * This clarifies on the instruction regarding avoidance, that is:   “Avoidance” (or, more proactively, “shunning”) urges nonparticipation in what are considered deceptively dangerous things (false teaching and disputes), but not complete disengagement from debate.[[3]](#footnote-3) |
| T | * So we should not participate in, and even counter, foolish controversies.      * How can we do that? |
| SP I-A | * Oppose teachings that are unbiblical; * correct what is has little biblical support. |
| ILL | * In church history class, we’ve heard of the hidden Japanese Christians.   Some of whom, in trying to avoid being tortured, started modifying their worship and practices.   * They started using Kwan Im to represent Mary, and placed her amongst the ancestral tablets to be worshipped. * This is a really sad situation, because ancestral worship became integrated into their beliefs. |
| APP | * In the same way, teachings that are not from the Bible should be corrected. * Changes that are made to please or accommodate man,   should be challenged,  and people’s eyes directed back to God. |
| T | * Sometimes however, the turning of focus onto man may not be so obviously unbiblical – it may be more subtle. |
| SP I-B | * We need to avoid discussions that lead to spiritual error. |
| ILL | * We’ve heard how fake news affected results of the US presidential elections. * The news sounded credible enough to be taken as real ones.   It was not so out of this world that people could tell that it will untrue.  Bits and pieces of truth and untruth were quietly woven together. |
|  | * In the same way, discussions that lead to spiritual error often stem from minor points of dispute in the Bible –   taking things out of context, or giving it inappropriate emphasis. |
| ILL | * For example, prosperity gospel’s emphasis on the material blessings of God.   God does bless us, He can and does bless us materially and financially.  But that is not the only way He blesses us. |
| APP | * We are called to oppose and correct these teachings. * Let us point people away from human desires, to God. |
| **MP II : Avoid arguments about legalistic matters (3:9c-d).** | |
| T SP II-A | * In the same way, shun legalistic debates about tradition. |
|  | * Today, we may no longer argue about Jewish ritual cleansing. |
| ILL | * But we certainly do disagree about other issues, like forms of baptism –   whether one has to be immersed, or if sprinkling is sufficient.  Whether it should be done in the sea, or a pool is fine. |
|  | * How about whether to use hymnals and the organ?   Or Saturday night worship? |
| APP | * Are church traditions binding us the same way the Jewish law code did in Jesus’ day?   Do we fight about forms and practices that do not bring life?   * Let us instead, practice grace, and not major on the minor. |
| T | * Besides traditions, other practices may also be areas of contention. |
| SP II-B | * In those minor points too, let us not be involved in heated arguments. |
|  | * Whether we should put on clerical robes like the temple priests, or women should wear head veils,   these are far from the theological message of the Bible. |
|  | * Let us take Augustine’s teaching to heart:   “In essentials, unity. In non-essentials, liberty. In all things, love.” |
| **Conclusion (3:9e).** | |
| T MI (1.) | * So, in essence, avoid useless man-focused debates and legalistic arguments. |
|  | * + Oppose teachings that are unbiblical   + Avoid discussions that lead to spiritual error   + Shun legalistic debates about tradition   + Do not be involved in heated arguments about minor points |
|  | because these things are unprofitable and worthless. |
|  | * This is contrasted with the excellent and profitable things in ver 8 * which is, devotion to good works. |
| T  2. | * For our part, that means:   point people to God and teach essentials of doctrine. |
| 3. | * Pray |

1. Nicola Menzie, "Forbes: Pastors Have One of the Toughest Leadership Roles ... But Not as Tough as Stay-at-Home Moms" The Christian Post, accessed 18 February 2017, <http://www.christianpost.com/news/forbes-pastors-have-one-of-the-toughest-leadership-roles-but-not-as-tough-as-stay-at-home-moms-115439/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://urbana.org/bio/ken-fong> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, The New International Commentary On the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2006), 795. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)