

In Favor of Arguing

Ponder: Is it ever right to argue?

Scripture: “. . . always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15 NKJV).

My parents often exhorted my siblings and me: “Don’t argue!” We knew what they meant. Don’t be antagonistic, sarcastic, rude, smart-alecky, and contentious. They were right about that.

Unfortunately, this proper aversion to crude behavior has been misapplied. “Arguments” of any kind are taboo in our post-modern culture. Not all arguments, however, violate God’s will. In fact, the Bible mandates respectful defense of the truth and refutation of error – both of which are impossible without some kind of arguing.

In no way does this mean we should be contentious or rude. Rather, we are to be “speaking the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15). Contentions, on the other hand, are among the “works of the flesh” that will cause one to be eternally lost (Galatians 5:20).

Jesus was the greatest debater ever to walk the earth! He answered critics’ arguments in ways that could not be contradicted; and He convicted people of the truth by appealing to Scripture and sound reasoning. While never being rude, He exposed sin, error, and hypocrisy. His opponents, of course, did not always appreciate it.

Apollos, too, was a skilled and effective debater. In Corinth, “he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ” (Acts 18:28). When error was advanced, Apollos did not quietly sit by, but refuted it with great energy and passion. Since the error was public, he refuted it publicly so that all might see the difference. He proved his point with Scripture. And Apollos had a point worth proving. Whether or not Jesus is the Christ is no minor issue!

To “argue” is simply to advance a line of reasoning. God’s word commands us to be ready to give an answer to those who ask for a reason for our hope (1 Peter 3:15). Yes, we can and should argue without being argumentative. We must contend earnestly for the faith (Jude 3) without being contentious.