

DIALOGUE VERSUS DEBATE

Things sure have changed over the 35 years that I've been a believer in Yeshua. Back when I was a young believer it seemed that everyone was in one accord and that we all found it easy to "agree to disagree" if the perimeter doctrines of the faith differed between believers. We didn't really worry whether one was a Calvinist or an Arminian or any of the other battles that seem to rage within the Church of Yeshua in our current time. We saw the enemy as the devil; Satan and his minions and we picked our battles with that horde rather than each other. It was a different time; a time when people were freer in Yeshua and enjoyed faith in Yahweh.

I was musing the other day about something that happened when I was a new believer and I wondered what would happen today if such a thing happened between two brothers. It was 1979 and I was probably three months old in my new faith and I was growing leaps and bounds. There were however, some things that I was ignorant about. Before I came to faith, I bought a tee shirt that had a picture on it that had all sorts of demons on it; they were having their way with human women and there was writing on the top that said, "sworn to fun, loyal to none." It truly was a vile shirt but in my newborn ignorance I didn't make the correlation about how evil the shirt's message really was. A dear brother walked up to me and told me that the shirt wasn't exactly what a believer in Yeshua should be wearing to church. I looked at the church, saw the scene on it, read the title and it hit me that he was right. I went home and burned the shirt. The brother helped me to see the shirt for what it was and the Ruach Ha Kodesh convicted me about it which caused me to destroy that terrible article of clothing.

Now, let's move 35 years into the future and see what would probably happen. Let's say that I saw someone wearing the same tee shirt. I know that the guy is saved because I was there when he came to faith and I know that he's been changed. Three months ago, the guy was a vile sinner and now he's a lover of Yahweh; he's borne fruit. So, I walk up to the brother and tell him just what my friend Greg told me all those years ago. I say, "wow, that's not exactly what a believer should be wearing anywhere, let alone to church." Now in all likelihood, in our current time the brother would probably scold me and tell me that I had offended him. He would say something like, "how dare you judge me when Jesus said not to judge." Then, just as an added measure, he'd probably tell others that he didn't like me because I'm judgmental, a Pharisee and that I don't mind my own business. Things have changed within the Body of Mashiach, and most of it hasn't been for the better.

Back in the earlier days we used to ponder things. Ponder means to “think about” things and to talk to each other about them. We all agreed on the core issues of our faith but there were some things that were gray areas where scripture wasn’t quite clear about things or it said several things that seemed contradictory about a certain subject. Most of the time it was just because we didn’t know the art of word studies and we didn’t bother to read the scriptures around the contended scriptures which caused us to miss the true meaning of what we were reading. The thing was however, that we didn’t get into fights about things. We always prayed that Yahweh would reveal the truth to ALL of us and that he would settle any differences that wanted to arise in our hearts about His Word. We always got answers and those who were wrong would admit that they were wrong while those who were right in not rubbing it in the face of the person who was wrong. Many times we just walked away from the subject because we realized that we were both right in one sense of another.

What we experienced back then was called dialogue. Dialogue can best be described scripturally by something that Yahweh says in the Tanakh. Yahweh said “come, let us reason together,” which is exactly what dialogue is. The Master of the Universe, the Creator of Everything; the King of Kings and Lord of Lords; the authority on all subjects says, “come let us reason together.” As believers in Yeshua, aren’t we supposed to be just the same as Yahweh Yeshua is? Aren’t we ambassadors? Aren’t we supposed to strive to act in accord with the one who laid down His life for us? The answer is YES. But today there are many who opt for Debate over Dialogue. They feel that they have to be a winner, the final word in everything. These are the people who feel that they have the special anointing of Yahweh, that their word is Yahweh’s final word. And sadly, they are the ones who mock, ridicule and cause all sorts of strife within the Body of Mashiach.

One such person is a woman we have dubbed as “twisty doodle,” a self-ascribed assassin of Believers who lies like a trap-door spider, hiding behind her den’s door to pounce on her prey as soon as they write anything that she doesn’t agree with. I do declare that if I were to post a blog posting about water being wet, she’d have a post loaded up on her site the next day accusing me of some sort of scripture infraction. She reminds me of the little girl at the playground who throws sand in your eyes and then runs home to tell her mother that you flailed around your arms like a blind person because you couldn’t see; however she’d tell her mother that you tried to hit her; that sort of mentality, or should I say ill mentality. We’ve all dealt with such people; the fly in the proverbial ointment or the wrench in the proverbial gears, but we learn to ignore them or even better, pray that Yahweh brings around justice.

The person that I just described above is masterful at debate, and also sandbox syndrome, and I know, as do others, that she does the things that she does because she's an emissary of the devil, who Yahweh Himself said is roaming the earth seeking who he may devour. However, there are other who are not quite as wicked, who just like to win debates and will goad people into debates. The thing that we need to do is not fall into their trap. I've included a list about the differences between debate and dialogue. It is quite a good list and shows the attributes of those who like to debate. Reading the Four Gospels we can see that there were many times where the Pharisee's tried to goad Yeshua into debate. Yeshua was masterful with such people; I mean after all, it said that he knew the hearts of men. There were times when he remained quiet; times when he would speak authoritatively, so much so that they could not answer; and there were times when Yeshua would answer a question with a question; a unique Jewish way of dealing with things.

People who debate are fools because they are turn their victims into adversaries with the intent of being right and pile driving the other person into the topsoil. These are not the actions of those who would mimic Yeshua or those who strive to be Messiah-like. They ignore the prime rules set down by Yeshua that the greatest among us needs to be servant of the least. If you are a servant, you are humble and contrite. You cannot initiate a debate if you are humble or contrite nor could you want to be a winner of a debate with the same qualities. Yahweh seeks humble and contrite people, so are the pile-driving debaters really walking with Yahweh or accomplishing anything for Him. The answer is an unequivocal NO.

There is only one thing that a good believer in Yeshua should ever debate; and that is when the core values of our faith are under attack. And what way is the best way to address the person initiating the attack? The best way to do that is to quote scripture. When you quote scripture, you quote Yahweh's Word, and if they want to argue with Yahweh then they have bigger fish to fry than you. Scripture says that scripture is like a two-edged sword:

Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but

was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. Hebrews 4:11-16

Notice that the scripture above says that we are to approach the Throne of Grace of Yahweh, and that we're supposed to approach it to obtain mercy and find grace. Mercy and grace are two things that are missing from debate; as a matter of fact, debate is diametrically opposed to mercy and grace. So, do we want to win a debate, or have dialogue. Debate demands that there is a winner and loser and in Yahweh's eyes it is the winner that becomes the loser. A person once said that "I'd rather remain quiet and be thought a fool than to open my mouth and remove all doubt." When another "supposed" believer (the proof is in the fruit) wants to debate, remain quiet I've learned to remain quiet and be thought the fool. Give such people over to Yahweh and let Him deal with them. He's much more effective at humbling sociopaths anyway.

Here is the list of the differences between debate and dialogue where believer to believer encounters are concerned:

- Dialogue is collaborative: two or more sides work together toward common understanding.
- *Debate is oppositional: two sides oppose each other and attempt to prove each other wrong.*
- In dialogue, finding common ground is the goal.
- *In debate, winning is the goal.*
- In dialogue, one listens to the other side(s) in order to understand, find meaning and find agreement.
- *In debate, one listens to the other side in order to find flaws and to counter its arguments.*
- Dialogue enlarges and possibly changes a participants point of view.
- *Debate affirms a participant's own point of view.*
- Dialogue reveals assumptions for re-evaluation.
- *Debate defends assumptions as truth.*
- Dialogue causes introspection on ones own position.
- *Debate causes critique of the other position.*
- Dialogue opens the possibility of reaching a better solution than any of the original solutions.
- *Debate defends one's own positions as the best solution and excludes other solutions.*

- Dialogue creates an open-minded attitude: an openness to being wrong and an openness to change.
- *Debate creates a close-minded attitude, a determination to be right.*
- In dialogue, one submits ones best thinking, knowing that other people's reflections will help improve it rather than destroy it.
- *In debate, one submits one's best thinking and defends it against challenge to show that it is right.*
- Dialogue calls for temporarily suspending one's beliefs.
- *Debate calls for investing wholeheartedly in one's beliefs.*
- In dialogue, one searches for basic agreements.
- *In debate, one searches for glaring differences.*
- In dialogue one searches for strengths in the other positions.
- *In debate one searches for flaws and weaknesses in the other position.*
- Dialogue involves a real concern for the other person and seeks to not alienate or offend.
- *Debate involves a countering of the other position without focusing on feelings or relationship and often belittles or deprecates the other person.*
- Dialogue assumes that many people have pieces of the answer and that together they can put them into a workable solution.
- *Debate assumes that there is a right answer and that someone has it.*
- Dialogue remains open-ended.
- *Debate implies a conclusion.*