**Debating and Collaborating the Christian Way:**

1 Peter 3:15: “But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.”

[Titus 3:9](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Titus+3%3A9&version=ESV): “But avoid foolish controversies, and genealogies, and quarrels about the law, because they are unprofitable and useless.”

These verses apply to both **debating** and **collaborating**, but each has a different purpose and time.

Let’s look at **the debate** first:

Purpose: Clarify the differences, highlight pros and cons in each position and identify information sources.

Time: Debate is needed to help make decisions about which candidate or position to support when more than one option is available, but a decision must be reached based solely on what is available.

Things to remember:

* Know what you’re talking about. Be prepared.
* Discussions and debates should all be gentle and respectful.
* Know that the topic is of value and profitable for debate – not a foolish argument.
* Your job is not to convince – you make a convincing argument, but to convince or convict is the job of the Holy Spirit. Billy Graham said it this way, “It is the Holy Spirit's job to convict, God's job to judge and my job to love.”15 (John 16:8: The Holy Spirit will convict the world concerning sin, righteousness and judgment.)
* Don’t lose your witness to make your point.

A well-known historic definition of debate is “To shake violently until only that which is true remains.” No wonder many people tend to lose their witness, but it’s not necessary. If you want the truth to remain, we have to remember that Jesus is the Way, the **Truth**, and the Life – (John 14:6). He really shook things up, but the Truth remained.

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| Observations | Degrading Debate | Informational Debate |
| Body Language | Straight, ridged, distant | Open, comfortable |
| Tone | Firm, fast, emphatic | Slower, clear, resolute |
| Words | Accusatory  “gotcha” | Thoughtful  Acknowledging |
| Other | Listening for response  Response confrontational | Confident |

**Christian Collaboration:**

Everything is not a debate – once elected, you need to work together to find solutions.

Collaboration purpose: To find solutions with mutual agreements and benefits.

Time: Collaboration is needed when multiple options are being considered to address a problem. Collaboration is not an issue of who has the most votes, it is an opportunity to find common ground and work together.

In politics, we have brought debate from the campaign trail into our great halls of decision-making. Rather than collaborating and coalescing, we have grown comfortable in our contempt and we rather chose to debate and divide.

Much of this is political party related. In George Washington’s farewell address16 he warns against the power and animosities of political parties. President Washington said, “…the common and continual mischiefs of the spirit of party are sufficient to make it the interest and duty of a wise people to discourage and restrain it.”

**Debating verses Collaborating:**

1. Win/lose – win/win
2. Argumentative – seeking harmony
3. Arrogant – humble
4. Telling – questioning
5. Speaking to be heard – listening to understand
6. Focused on differences – seeking common ground
7. Highlighting what’s wrong – finding what’s right
8. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(add others identified by the group)

**How are Christians expected to collaborate?** (*Sermon by Michael Stewart 17)*

1. Say “no” to personal preference. These things are usually not important and there are multiple differing views. Let go of the pride and stay away from that battle. (See James 4:1)
2. Say “maybe” to personal convictions. If you are convicted of something, share that with another believer and seek wise counsel. If a fellow brother or sister is convicted of something, listen and seek wise counsel together. (See Col 2:18-23)
3. Say “yes” to Biblical truth. As Christians, the Bible is our instruction book – it’s not full of suggestions, it’s full of directions. Work together to ensure proper interpretation and, once again, seek wise counsel – but always hold firm to the Word of God. This is the only battle worth fighting. (See 2 Tim 3:16, Isaiah 55:11 and Ps 119:114)

Reverend Dr. Rodney Wood, President of the Mission Foundation, has often been quoted as saying, “Difference should never lead to distance.” He believes strongly that differences should not force us apart, but that we should rather pull even closer together – while that may not always mean resolution, it is certainly much easier to resolve something with someone you are close to.

This is true in all our relationships. In the book, *Sacred Marriage*,18 by Gary Thomas, there is a suggestion that you fall forward rather than falling away from each other in hard times. We need to fall forward to understand, pray, discuss and turn or fall toward each other and toward God.