

“Fight, Fight, Fight”

Steve Higginbotham

While in college, I was playing in an “all important” intramural basketball game. Things were getting rather chippy when it finally happened. Someone on the opposing team punched a player on my team. My teammate fell to the floor, the benches cleared, spectators spilled onto the floor, and instantaneously everyone circled around the two players. All that was missing was the chant of “fight, fight, fight,” like you used to hear on the playground. Then something incredible happened. The young man who was punched looked up to the young man who punched him and simply said, “I forgive you.” Suddenly there was a hushed silence, and the young man who punched him turned and ran out of the gym with tears in his eyes. Never before had I seen such a poignant display of God’s wisdom (Proverbs 15:1; Romans 12:21).

Through several social media forums, I’ve witnessed brethren figuratively forming circles and chanting, “fight, fight, fight,” and have read some of the most ill-tempered and quarrelsome dialogues. I’ve also noted that when such vitriolic speech is noted, those who use it are quick to quote Jesus’ words to the Scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23. But such a response is not an adequate defense. Jesus knew their hearts. His words were carefully chosen and were the absolute truth. We don’t know each other’s hearts. Therefore when we speak harshly, we sometimes get it wrong because we have incorrectly judged another person’s heart.

Hateful, sarcastic, biting rhetoric may help one “win a debate,” but it won’t help one “win your brother.” Can we not defend the truth while at the same time pursue a kinder, gentler brotherhood? May the day come when we learn to enjoy kindness, patience, and longsuffering more than we do “putting someone in their place.” Are there times when people need to be corrected? Of course. But when people need correcting, don’t pleasure in it and give each other a round of “high-fives” for putting one in his place. Would not a better response be that of humility and encouraging others to keep the erring brother in prayer?

I’m committed to defending the truth of Jesus Christ, but I’ve lost my taste for the chant of “fight, fight, fight.” I hope you have too.

“A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition...” (2 Timothy 2:24).