

**Series: Order in the Church**

**Title: Learning the Art of Refusal**

**Text: Titus 3:9**

*But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.*

**Buzzards Vs. Eagles**

Similar, but very different

Both Birds.

Both Soar on the wind.

Both have Powerful wings and sharp vision.

They both view life on the ground very differently.

Eagles look for life, by looking for signs of life.

Buzzards look for death, by the absence of the signs of life.

Whatever a Christian is interested , or not interested in....

Will determine their spiritual focus, which in turn...

Will determine the eternal difference their lives make.

As Christians, we need to cultivate the spiritual art of Refusal.

The discernment of what to pursue and what to ignore.

(Heb 5:14) *But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*

As Kid, there were no buffet restaurants in my town.

The closest we had was Thanksgiving dinner.

Explain how Mom arranged the house.

Explain how Mom would setup a buffet line.

Explain how I would try and pick a little of everything.

Explain how my eyes were bigger than my stomach.

Learning the art of refusal is critical in the buffet line, and the Christian life.

I have had to learn to pick good food physically, and pick good food Spiritually.

The spiritual influences we allow in our lives can make us spiritually healthy, or give us a stomach ache.

There are things in this life we need to learn to ignore.

They distract us from health spiritual growth and the kind of Christian life we need to live.

Paul tells Titus that he needs to help the Cretians cultivate the Art of Refusal.

The need to ignore four specific distraction, that look interesting, but bear no spiritual fruit for the Father's Glory, or the Expansion of His Kingdom.

If not, you will end up with a spiritual stomach ache and the pastor will have a spiritual headache!

**Avoiding Distractions:** (Titus 3:8) *This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. **These things are good and profitable unto men.***

**Then he makes a unique distinction:** (Titus 3:9) *But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; **for they are unprofitable and vain.***

He doesn't say, avoid them because they are unpopular.

The Word of God has never been popular.  
If popularity was the goal, I would preach ***Prosperity Gospel***.

**Paul lists four popular distractions that are unprofitable spiritually, and distractions from performing God's purposes in our lives.**

***Unprofitable*** ~ Producing no improvement or advantage;  
useless; serving no purpose;  
Not useful to others.  
Bringing no glory to God

He doesn't say they are unpopular.  
They are not Profitable for you to engage in debate about.

***Avoid:*** To Shun, To turn away from.  
I/E When everyone else is captivated & digging in, we are to turn our faces and hearts away from them.

***Foolish Questions:*** (Titus 3:9a)  
***But avoid foolish questions,***  
"Foolish" ~ Moras = Moron  
"Questions" ~ Investigating things that have no basis or substantive meaning.

Speculations that can be resolved.  
Fascinating conjectures that waste our time and cause heated debate amongst brethren.

Paul warned (1 Tim 1:4)(2 Tim 2:23)  
When the bible is silent, or vague, we should not divide over debatable topics. (Eph 4:3)

Our church is a microcosm of Christianity. We have people that come from all types of Church backgrounds.

***Illus:*** Protestant, Evangelical, Baptist.

***Illus:*** HS diploma - Earned Doctorate

***Illus:*** Enlisted, Officer, Civilian

It is the Bible that pulls us all together.  
We all get saved the Same way.  
If people let us lead them to study the bible for themselves,  
then our differences dissipate.

How were the believers on Crete going to come together?  
Rich and Poor, Educated and Ignorant.  
Converted Descendants of Pirates & historic Jewish converts.

***Unity around the Word of God is the key to all unity.***  
Our preferences are not the same as Doctrine.  
Standards of Dress, Music Styles, Expository, or Topical.

***Illus:*** For many years, I avoided the Study of Eschatology, the study of Last Things. Prophecy, the book of the Revelation.  
I met so many people enthralled with it, seeming spiritual, salving their curiosity, but never soul winning. Not Serving.

The church will never be defeated, by it does get distracted!

***Proclaiming the Word, & Obedience to it's authority is Unity***  
We are surrounded by a buffet of opinions & speculations.  
We need to stick to the Word.  
Preacher always said: "If the plain sense makes good sense seek no other sense lest it result in nonsense."

**Genealogies:** (Titus 3:9b)

***But avoid- genealogies,***

The Jewish people meticulously investigated & documented their family blood lines, b/c their inheritance in the land was determined by it.

Paul warned, that Jewish believers would claim a spiritual authority over the gentile believers.

They were saved 1st, on pentecost.

They would claim spiritual discordancy from the Apostles. As Jews, they would claim racial descendants from the Prophets.

***But avoid ... genealogies ... for they are ...vain.***

People do it to satisfy their vanity.

Imagine, Paul sending Titus, a gentile, who is unconnected to royalty, unimpressive in his past experience, to be an elder at their church.

Bypassing members who were distant relatives of Jewish nobles, or heads of the gentile clans on the island.

The only Genealogy that matters in eternity, is the new birth.

(John 1:12) *But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: 13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

**Strife:** (Titus 3:9c)

***But avoid - contentions*** ~ Arguing & Quarreling.

Contentions can destroy a church.

*Illus: Church Split, Sued each other for the property, all started over a church dinner and 2 different portion sizes.*

Strife is an ever-present distraction waiting to happen within the church.

***The devil has always used division to destroy.***

(Joh 10:10a) *The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy:*

He separated the First Family from God, by creating a quarrel between them and God.

He separated the First Family from each other by creating a quarrel between the brothers.

Contentions distract focus from the Gospel to personality conflicts:

Contentions breaks the unity of the church into cliques & circles.

Contentions refuses to listen to reason & is fueled by rumor & Emotion.

Contentions invites Satan to come into the church

Contentions is 1 of the 7 things God hates: (Prov 6:16-19b\*)

**Disputes About the Lawyers:** (Titus 3:9d)

***But avoid - strivings about the law.***

For decades, the NT churches were embroiled in debate over how the Law of Moses might related to them.

A major division was averted by a meeting between the apostles that were alive and Paul & Barnabas at the FBC Jerusalem.

Grace no longer required Gentile to effectively become Jews to be welcomed into the churches.

Titus was to stand strong against those that wanted the churches to be an upgraded version of Judaism's synagogues.

In bible college, 2 students were disciplined when their verbal quarrel over the doctrine of Sanctification escalated into a fist fight.

We have not had that problem here, but just Google church fights, and then prepare to be embarrassed by our brethren.

It's a proven fact...

The Bride of Christ can act horribly while waiting for its Groom.

The Bride of Christ can trip walking down the aisle.  
The Bride of Christ can dry her shoes, & soil her dress.  
The Bride of Christ can embarrass her Groom.

Paul writes to them and to us:  
AVOID, SHUN, TURN our face away from,  
DON'T get involved in,  
Don't pick them from the buffet, even though others are partaking of them.

**Developing a Strategy of Refusal:**  
“for they are unprofitable and vain.”

***Be Discerning:*** Stay within Biblical Boundaries  
(Is 8:20) *To the Law & the Testimony, if they speak not ...*  
If the Bible is clear, speak loudly.

If the bible is Vague or for the most part silent, follow suit.  
(1 Cor 2:13) *Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*

Interpret the Obscure in light of that which is clear.

***Be Determined:*** Keep Our Focus on the Mission.  
(Titus 3:9)

***But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.***

Unprofitable = Fruitless!

Who gets won to Christ in all this confusion? NO ONE!  
Who gets Discipled in all this confusion? NO ONE!

After all the blogging, Facebook Posting, Twitter feeds, and such, we have produced NO spiritual fruit.  
(Eph 4:1-3)

Satan doesn't have to destroy us, just disappoint us.  
If he can't disappoint us, then he tries to distract us.

What is the reason you give for not fellowshiping with certain people. For Not Serving? For Not Praying?  
***Disappointment, Distraction, Division?***  
***Can you start to see what has been unprofitable & vain?***  
***Can you let the Holy Spirit help you discern & say NO!***