

5. Open-minded Humility versus Quenching the Spirit

August 11, 2013

I. Open-minded Humility

A. Introduction

1. Need
2. Definition

B. Humility

1. Acknowledgment
2. Risk
3. Distrust
4. Love

C. Openness

1. First, you must display a comparative spirit
2. Second, you must engage empathetically
3. Third you must willingly dialogue
4. Fourth, you must take on an objective posture

How can you defend that idea that the first three qualities are *all* essential to meaningful openness?

Furthermore, engaging empathetically in comparative dialogue does not make for open-mindedness if, for example, we stiff-arm and polarize the situation by various expressions of a subjective posture. Polarization closes down discussion. The subjective posture manifests itself in statements like the following: "I know I am right" and "I know you're wrong." In addition, it can be subtle (it can be conveyed in tone, gesture, or in overall approach). For example, some people never ask questions of their pastors for clarification, information, and learning. Instead, they only offer objections and alternatives. "There is a time to be a learner" is a lesson sometimes difficult to apply to ourselves. Some people listen only long enough to disagree. They have a penchant for disagreement. They disagree immediately, they must relay some other side even before the whole picture they oppose is given (they interrupt flow of thought and thus divide and conquer by fragmentation).

Openness means that in the discussion of differences (that should be on the table) you do not emphasize what you believe. You are not conclusions oriented where you emphasize what you believe over against what so and so believes. You do not polarize and keep others at arms length with a stiff arm. Instead, you take on a *reasons oriented posture*. You are most interested in the premises, the foundations, and the important contexts of Scripture. *Most of all, you want the Scriptures to be on the table; you want an open Bible that you go to with others with an open heart.* You are willing to engage arguments without quarreling. You open yourself up to others and address things wisely per the need of the moment with due consideration, respect, trust, and hope. Here you can say, "I may be wrong, but here is why I hold to x, what do you think about it?" "Correct me if I am wrong, but my basis is this." An objective posture means that you do not run away from dialogue but you invite it, not to quarrel, but to sharpen iron with iron for mutual up building. We take some things up knowing that closed-mindedness can be a fault of both those who have the truth as well as those that do not have it.

It is about how we carry ourselves in discussion. Objective means we try to steer away from saying, "I believe," "My view is" and we try to concentrate attention on the issues at hand (depersonalizing where possible). We will pursue clear definition, historical perspective, and be

context sensitive (get the speaker's or writer's perspective, definitions of terms, etc., to receive what he presents, fairly and fully). It is "reasons oriented" rather than "conclusions oriented" (emphasize process versus conclusion). We will say, "I may be wrong, but here is why one might hold x" (even here, we try not to say why "I" hold x). "Let's talk about the whys and wherefores." "Correct me if I'm wrong." "Please, correct me where you think I am wrong." *These comments depolarize, invite further discussion, and welcome counter-question. This objective approach opens up discussion rather than closing it down.*

A contrast as a conversation begins on a subject over which there is difference of opinion: "I believe x, and you are not going to change my mind." The problem is not the differing *per se*; nor is it in having a firm belief. The problem is a lack of openness, of being so closed that you cannot reexamine a belief seriously. As a relationship issue, this closes down discussion and misses out on an opportunity to find new insights; that potential *always* exists.

Conclusion

C. S. Lewis made a statement that has the effect of defining open-minded humility: "I like my Christianity as I like my whisky, straight." This defines Christian broad-mindedness as an attitude that says, "Give me the whole picture, both the easy and the hard stuff, undiluted." For example, the doctrines of grace have some difficult aspects that are hard to understand (2 Pet 3.16) and hard to hear without complaint (Rom 9.18-21). However, we must not complain against God but submit ourselves humbly to Him, to His sovereignty with adoring wonder.

Closed-mindedness puts you into a straight jacket of "invincible ignorance" (a logical fallacy that I call the fallacy of the closed mind). Also, note the quip that calls us to broad-mindedness: "Some people are so narrow that if they turn sideways, they disappear!" Face to face, they may look broad shouldered but when they turn on you, eek! They can be razor sharp and cut deeply. *Open-mindedness is important for good conversation in which godly people seek to build up one another by loving exchanges.*

For clarification

Calling for OMH is not saying, "be so open that your brains fall out." There is plenty of room for godly critical thinking. It is not saying that you are not to have conviction, but that even with conviction (gained by critical thinking over time; seasoned) you are willing to engage empathetically (and with all the graces of open-minded humility) for the sake of those in need according to the need of the moment, within reason and according to your priorities. After all, we are to have answers when asked; we are to know things with conviction. Still, the manner of interaction is to include gentleness toward others out of reverence for Christ (1 Pet 3.15). Hence, our speech is to be seasoned toward outsiders (Col 4.4-5), and *how much more therefore for those inside the family of God ought out speech be tasty and promote their good.*

Consider this on the need for reexamining things with a sense of opportunity and looking for new insights: when we reexamine, it is like inspecting the plumbing for leaks or opening up the tent and looking for any signs of mildew. There is much confirmation for confident assurance in the faith; things may be in good order in our thoughts and practices based on them. Otherwise, if we find a leak or see some mildew, we are now in position to take some helpful and healthy corrective measures. This can only be good and glorifying to God!