

*The Articles of*  
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# Standing in Your Youth

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The scriptures provide us with many opportunities to examine ourselves. One is in the Lord's Supper, of which Paul said in **1 Cor. 11:28**, “*let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup*”. Another is in the work we do (**Gal. 6:4**). I like Paul's question in **2 Cor. 13:5**: “*Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?*” What a great question; how well do you know yourself? Paul precedes that question with the instructions to “*Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves*”. In all of these exhortations it is made clear that self-examination is healthy, needed, and should be a regular practice. May I encourage you as you examine yourself regularly to dissect your convictions: What do you believe? Why do you believe what you believe? Where is the source of your conviction? As young Christians, let us ask ourselves these questions often because, as we know, there are plenty of reasons to stand for something, and most of them are not good reasons...

Some will stand for almost anything, and with little reason. In his instructions to Timothy, Paul reminds us of the importance in having a good cause for the stances we take and the disputes that may arise because of them: “*But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife*” (**2 Tim. 2:23**). We need to have a reason for our convictions; we all know some who would argue with a brick wall for standing in their way! What good is debate or argumentation without substance and purpose?

Others will stand for the sake of tradition. Jesus reminds us in his rebuke of the Pharisees that “*teaching as doctrines the commandments of men*” (**Mark 7:7**) or holding the “*tradition of men*” (**6**) is “*laying aside the commandment of God*” (**8,9**) and is indicative of a heart far from the Lord (**7**). Paul reminded the brethren in Colossae not to be cheated by “*philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world*” (**Col. 2:8**). Are our convictions grounded in these things?

Others will stand only to gain a reputation. Politicians or religious figures are sometimes accused of outwardly standing for what will secure votes or boost their social status. When it comes to religious conviction, the scriptures clarify the importance of authentic belief and obedience. We remember those Pharisees in Jesus' day doing their works “*to be seen by men*” (**Matt. 23:4**), whom Jesus labeled “*hypocrites*” (**13**), “*son[s] of hell*” (**15**), “*blind guides*” (**16**), and “*fools*” (**17**). Jesus also spoke of hypocrites who would sound a trumpet before themselves (**Matt. 6:2**) and pray standing on the street corners so that others would see their good deeds (**5**). How much better are we if our stand for the truth is grounded in our love for ourselves or for human recognition?

Some will stand for whatever is important to their friends. Influence and pressure may force false convictions on those who are not firmly planted (**Psalms 1:3-4**). Paul warns us of being “*tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine*” (**Eph. 4:14**). Is this the reason we stand for Jesus Christ? Because our friends do? Still others may hold a certain conviction out of fear, some out of pride, or some will just never stand for anything! Alexander Hamilton said “Those who stand for nothing fall for

anything”.

Let us make sure we know what we stand for, where we stand, and why. Peter said in **1 Pet. 3:15**, “*Always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you*”. I used to think that meant we have to immediately know book, chapter, and verse for every question that comes our way, but that is not the case. Being ready to give a defense for the hope that is in us does not mean we have to memorize the Bible cover to cover, but surely Peter intended more from us when asked why we have hope in Jesus than the answer, “I just do, okay?!” We need to be able at the very least to tell people what we did to be saved, how we know we are saved, and what they can do to be saved; the hope that is in us comes from Jesus Christ, and we need to be able to communicate that truth. But our lifestyle and practices need to be grounded in the doctrine of Jesus and his apostles as well, and we must do our best to learn and commit to memory effective scriptural support for those things (**2 Tim. 3:14-15**).

Paul was a man of genuine conviction. As he wrote to the Corinthian brethren in **1 Cor. 9**, he applied the struggles and rewards of physical competition to those of our spiritual journey. He encouraged the brethren to live as if life were a physical race where only one contestant is rewarded a crown. Paul said, “*Therefore, I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air*” (**1 Cor. 9:26-27**). Paul was not uncertain about the source of his convictions; he knew what he was fighting for. He was not uncertain about what his convictions were; he knew where to throw his punches. And he surely was not uncertain about the reason behind his conviction; he knew why he was punching in the first place!

We should be aware that the denominational world contains many who are ready to tackle our convictions. I recently read a post in a religious online forum that accused the “church of Christ denomination” of producing “droid slave” women because of our beliefs on women's roles in the church. Many in the religious world would also accuse us of “splitting hairs” in our conviction of the necessity of baptism in salvation (**Acts 2:38; 22:16; Gal. 3:26-27**). In the matter of our *a capella* song worship (**Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16**), we are thought to be neglecting the weightier matters. Our lack of recreation in worship is considered too strict, our adherence to the New Testament church example is considered obsolete, and, worst of all, our careful treatment of the word of God (**2 Tim. 3:16-17**) is considered tedious and impractical! We've got to know WHY we believe WHAT we believe and be ready to stand for it!

I love the words of the Greek physicist Archimedes, whose studies in leverage brought him to say the famous words “Give me a place to stand, and a lever long enough, and I will move the world”. The Lord has provided those of us who are young Christians with a place to stand in Him (**1 Thess. 3:8**), a lever long enough (**Heb. 4:12**), and a world to move (**Matt. 28:18-20**). God bless you in your stand for the Lord!

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