When Certainty Silences Dialogue: Pride, Listening, and the Biblical Pursuit of Truth

---

Forward

This post arises from discussions surrounding the meaning of *ekklesia* and its translation as “church,” and how believers respond when biblical examination challenges long-held assumptions. The issue is no longer merely linguistic or historical; it becomes relational. Why do conversations about *ekklesia* so often end in offense rather than in careful biblical reasoning?

This study explores how pride, fear of being wrong, and an unwillingness to listen can transform a scriptural question into personal conflict, and why practices such as the Lord’s Supper become applications of the deeper disagreement over what constitutes a true biblical assembly.

Introduction

Disagreements among Christians are not new. From the earliest days of the faith, believers wrestled with questions of doctrine and practice (Acts 15:1–6). Scripture provides a model for addressing such disputes through humility, careful reasoning, and submission to the Word of God.

Yet in many modern discussions, especially when long-held

assumptions are challenged, dialogue quickly turns into declaration: *“I am right, and you are wrong, and there is nothing more to discuss.”* This posture does not invite biblical examination; it shuts it down.

This paper seeks to examine **why disagreements—especially concerning the nature of the assembly (*ekklēsia*)—so often lead to relational breakdown instead of scriptural reasoning**, and how Scripture calls believers to respond with humility, patience, and a shared pursuit of truth.

---

1. Truth Requires Listening and Examination

Scripture consistently teaches that truth is clarified through hearing and testing, not through shutting down inquiry.

> *“He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.” (Proverbs 18:13)*
> *“The first to plead his cause seemeth right; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him.” (Proverbs 18:17)*

The Bereans provide a model of godly discernment:

> *“These were more noble… in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” (Acts 17:11)*

Listening to another viewpoint does not mean accepting it. It means allowing Scripture—not pride or tradition—to serve as the final authority (2 Timothy 3:16–17). Refusing to listen deprives believers of the very process God uses to sharpen understanding.

---

2. Pride Turns Doctrinal Disagreement into Personal Conflict

When disagreement becomes personal, pride replaces humility and dialogue becomes division.

Scripture warns:

> *“Only by pride cometh contention.” (Proverbs 13:10)*
> *“God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.” (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5)*

Instead of saying, *“Show me from Scripture where I am wrong,”* pride says:

- “I do not need to explain myself.”
- “Your view is dangerous.”
- “This conversation is over.”

Yet Scripture commands:

> *“Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.” (James 1:19)*
> *“Speaking the truth in love.” (Ephesians 4:15)*

The refusal to engage is not a defense of truth; it is often a defense of personal certainty.

---

3. Fear of Being Wrong Is Not Faithfulness

Many believers avoid hearing opposing views because doing so

threatens long-held assumptions. But Scripture treats correction as a virtue, not a weakness:

> *“Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.” (2 Timothy 4:2)*
> *“Open rebuke is better than secret love.” (Proverbs 27:5)*

Two realities often exist when someone refuses to listen:

1. They sense their belief may not be fully grounded in Scripture.
2. They desire comfort more than truth.

God commands His people to love truth above personal security:

> *“Buy the truth, and sell it not.” (Proverbs 23:23)*
> *“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” (1 Thessalonians 5:21)*

Faith is not blind loyalty to tradition. Faith is confidence that God’s Word will withstand examination.

---

4. The Question of the Assembly (*Ekklēsia*) as a Flashpoint

These dynamics become especially visible when discussing the nature of the assembly (*ekklēsia*). The New Testament consistently describes the assembly as a physically gathered body with recognized order and leadership (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; 1 Corinthians 11:17–20).

Scripture speaks of believers:

> *“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together.” (Hebrews 10:25)*

> *“When ye come together in one place…” (1 Corinthians 11:20)*
> *“Wait one for another.” (1 Corinthians 11:33)*

These phrases presuppose physical presence and covenant unity. To raise questions about whether modern assumptions—such as virtual or purely online gatherings—fit this biblical pattern is not rebellion, but responsible biblical inquiry.

However, such questions are often met not with Scripture, but with dismissal: *“That is wrong,”* without explanation. What should be a discussion of biblical definition becomes a relational offense. The disagreement is no longer about the text of Scripture but about loyalty to established custom.

---

5. The Lord’s Supper as an Application of the Assembly Question

This tension becomes especially evident when disagreements about the nature of the assembly affect concrete practices such as the Lord’s Supper. If Scripture defines the assembly as a physically gathered body under recognized order (Acts 14:23; 1 Corinthians 11:17–20), then the observance of the Supper necessarily follows that same definition.

Paul connects the Supper directly to the gathered assembly:

> *“When ye come together therefore into one place…” (1 Corinthians 11:20)*
> *“Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another.” (1 Corinthians 11:33)*

Thus, disputes over whether a virtual or informal gathering may administer the Supper are not primarily about the ordinance itself, but about the underlying definition of *ekklesia*. When this foundational question is dismissed rather

than examined from Scripture, relational conflict replaces biblical reasoning.

---

6. Division as a Spiritual Danger

Scripture repeatedly warns against division among brethren:

> *“Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned.” (Romans 16:17)*
> *“For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal?” (1 Corinthians 3:3)*

Division often arises not from doctrine itself, but from how doctrine is handled—with pride instead of patience and certainty instead of charity.

> *“For we are not ignorant of his devices.” (2 Corinthians 2:11)*

Satan thrives where conversation ends and bitterness begins.

---

7. The Biblical Alternative: Reasoning Together

God does not command blind agreement. He commands humble reasoning:

> *“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD.” (Isaiah 1:18)*
> *“Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.” (Proverbs 27:17)*

Correction is to be given gently:

> *“In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.” (2 Timothy 2:25)*

Listening does not weaken conviction; it refines it. Truth is strengthened, not threatened, by honest examination.

Conclusion: Truth Is Not Preserved by Silence

When believers refuse to listen, they do not protect truth—they hinder it. When pride governs conversations about Scripture, relationships fracture and biblical examination is replaced by certainty without testing. This is especially evident when disagreements over the nature of the assembly (*ekklesia*) are treated as personal threats rather than opportunities for careful study of God’s Word.

The question, therefore, is not merely *Who is right?*
The deeper question is: *Are we willing to be corrected by Scripture, even if it costs us comfort, tradition, or certainty?*

Christ prayed:

> *“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” (John 17:17)*

The purpose of this discussion is not to win arguments, but to recover biblical clarity. When disagreement over *ekklesia* becomes personal, then Christ’s assembly loses both truth and fellowship. Yet Scripture provides a better way—humility, listening, and shared submission to God’s Word.

Disagreement need not destroy unity. Pride will.

Truth is not preserved by silence, but by Scripture examined together.
