



SOMETIMES IT'S JUST BETTER TO BE QUIET

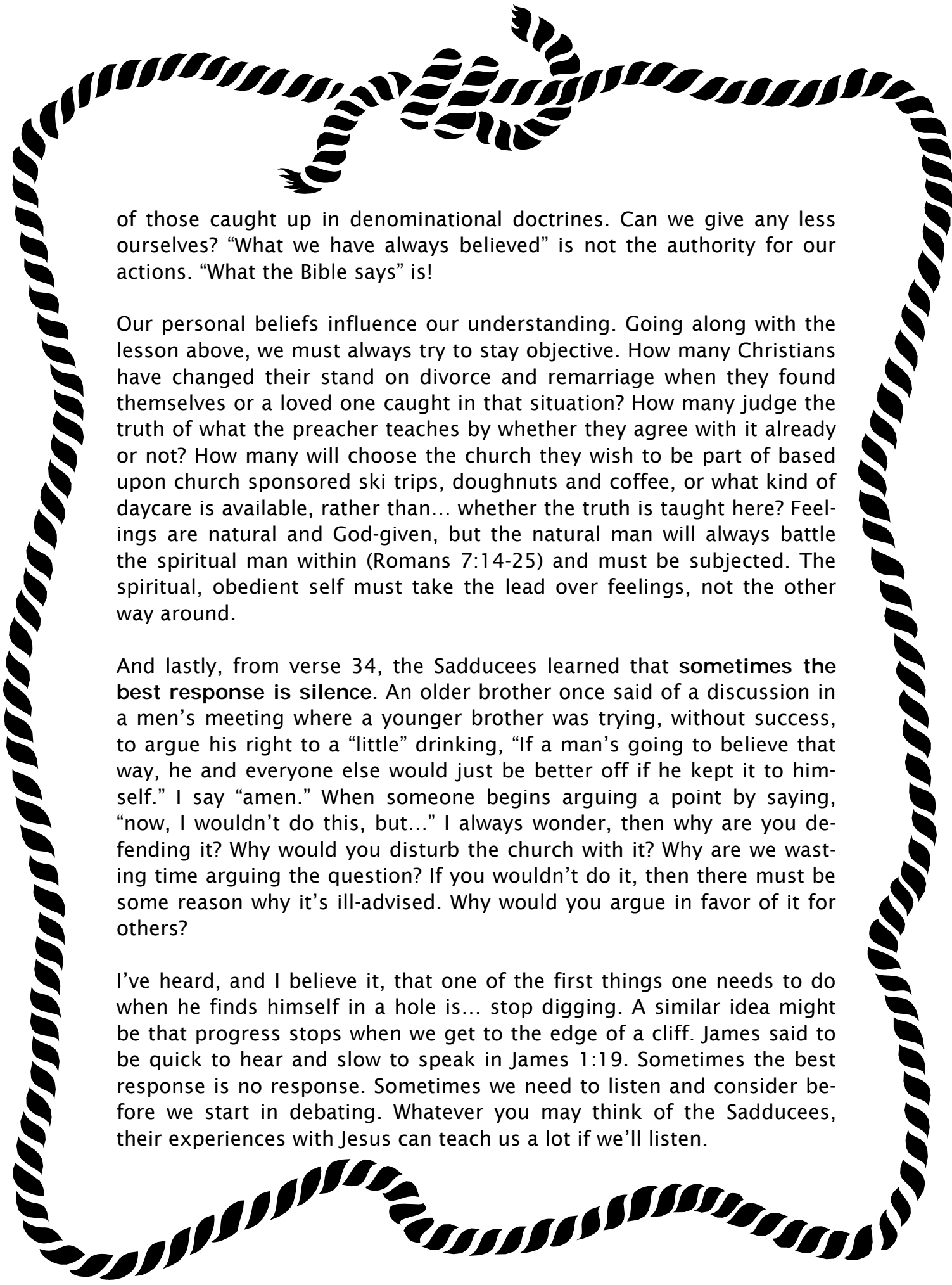
by Carl McMurray

In Matthew 22:23 our Lord was faced, in the last week of His life, by another group desiring to trap Him. The Sadducees faced Him with what they probably thought was an unanswerable question. No doubt they had used this argument with some success on their theological foes, the Pharisees. But they were not dealing with a Pharisee this time, and they learned some lessons that would be good for us to take note of. When they asked their famous “whose wife will she be in the resurrection?” question (while not even believing in the resurrection themselves) they were quickly given lessons by the master teacher. They were taught that...

Having the Scriptures is not the same as knowing them. The first words Jesus said were, “You are mistaken, not understanding the scriptures...” What an unbelievable statement! The Sadducees were the party made up mainly of priests. They were temple treasurers, Levites, and rulers in the Sanhedrin. It might be natural to respond, “If a priest doesn’t understand the Scripture, who does?” But natural or not, Jesus says they didn’t. Christians today are priests under one High Priest. They have been given the Scriptures protected and preserved by God. But as we’ve noted, having the Scriptures and understanding them are two different things.

Do we understand forgiveness for example? When one says “I just can’t forgive...” I suspect we don’t understand the Scriptures. We’ve failed to see that we have no choice in this matter, Luke 17:3-10. Do we understand that repentance is necessary? (Luke 17:3; Colossians 3:13) When we treat forgiveness as a feeling rather than an action, or we offer it without the asking, we demonstrate a lack of understanding.

The Sadducees were taught that **experienced students of Scripture could err.** They had built an elaborate system of argumentation based upon a misunderstanding. No matter how long we have believed something or how deeply we have held it, we need to be open enough and humble enough to always be able to consider the other side. We ask this



of those caught up in denominational doctrines. Can we give any less ourselves? “What we have always believed” is not the authority for our actions. “What the Bible says” is!

Our personal beliefs influence our understanding. Going along with the lesson above, we must always try to stay objective. How many Christians have changed their stand on divorce and remarriage when they found themselves or a loved one caught in that situation? How many judge the truth of what the preacher teaches by whether they agree with it already or not? How many will choose the church they wish to be part of based upon church sponsored ski trips, doughnuts and coffee, or what kind of daycare is available, rather than... whether the truth is taught here? Feelings are natural and God-given, but the natural man will always battle the spiritual man within (Romans 7:14-25) and must be subjected. The spiritual, obedient self must take the lead over feelings, not the other way around.

And lastly, from verse 34, the Sadducees learned that **sometimes the best response is silence**. An older brother once said of a discussion in a men’s meeting where a younger brother was trying, without success, to argue his right to a “little” drinking, “If a man’s going to believe that way, he and everyone else would just be better off if he kept it to himself.” I say “amen.” When someone begins arguing a point by saying, “now, I wouldn’t do this, but...” I always wonder, then why are you defending it? Why would you disturb the church with it? Why are we wasting time arguing the question? If you wouldn’t do it, then there must be some reason why it’s ill-advised. Why would you argue in favor of it for others?

I’ve heard, and I believe it, that one of the first things one needs to do when he finds himself in a hole is... stop digging. A similar idea might be that progress stops when we get to the edge of a cliff. James said to be quick to hear and slow to speak in James 1:19. Sometimes the best response is no response. Sometimes we need to listen and consider before we start in debating. Whatever you may think of the Sadducees, their experiences with Jesus can teach us a lot if we’ll listen.