

Level Three Issues: Ecclesiology—affects how the church body functions; determines what church the person goes to or how the church approaches its mandate as the Body of Christ and its functions
Level Four Issues: Perception—affects how the person perceives or sees something; determines the person's opinion or persuasion on a particular subject

(Mark Dever)

Clear and Serious
Clear but not Serious

Not Clear but Serious
Not Clear and not Serious

ESV **Romans 14:3** Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him.

ESV **Galatians 1:8** But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.

Minimal Unity > Minimal Fellowship | Maximal Unity > Maximal Fellowship

Example: A Local Church Doctrinal Statement

By recognizing different priorities

ESV **1 Corinthians 10:24** Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor. (But, which neighbor[s] do I prioritize? cf. Eph 4:25)

ESV **1 Peter 2:13** Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, ¹⁴ or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. (But, how much do I prioritize earthly citizenship? cf. Phil 3:20)

ESV **1 Timothy 5:8** But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. (But, what about prioritizing my other family? cf. Luke 14:26)

ESV **Galatians 6:10** So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. (But, who in the household do I prioritize? cf. 1 John 4:20)

By recognizing different responsibilities

ESV **Matthew 18:17** If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. ¹⁸ Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹ Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."

ESV **Hebrews 13:17** Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

seriousness (matter) + responsibility (relationship) = nature (engagement)

Example: A Local Church Members' Covenant

Sunday, October 05, 2025
Danny Capon, *Pastor*

A Theology of Disagreement
No. 9 | Wisdom and Disagreement

Selected Scriptures

Review

A Theology of Disagreement

We can disagree about what **is** (reality).
We can disagree about what it **means** (interpretation).
We can disagree about what is **right** (righteous).
We can disagree about what is **best** (wisdom).
We can disagree about what we should **care** about (values).
We can disagree about what we should **want** (desires).
We can disagree about what we are **okay** with (submission).

- A disagreement is a situation in which two parties do not have the same opinion.
- A disagreement occurs, most observably, because no two parties are exactly the same and both parties are naturally morally corrupt.
- A disagreement may not initially be morally consequential or result in immoral conduct between two parties.
- A disagreement may also start out immorally by one or both parties, and proceed quickly to conflict or a range of other relationally-charged actions.

Wisdom and Disagreement

How does wisdom contribute to our understanding and handling of disagreement?

To what degree does wisdom operate in all our (matters of) agreement and disagreement? To what degree *should* wisdom operate in both?

truth
unity
love
wisdom

Are all *matters* of (dis)agreement the same?
Are all *people* I may (dis)agree with the same? (Or, is my *relationship* to all people I may disagree with the same?)

What is wisdom?

In general...

"Skill at living." > applicable knowledge applied appropriately

"Acting in light of all facts and correct values." (Millard Erickson)

In particular...

ESV **Deuteronomy 1:12** How can I bear by myself the weight and burden of you and your strife? ¹³ Choose for your tribes wise, understanding, and experienced men, and I will appoint them as your heads.

ESV **Deuteronomy 4:5** See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. ⁶ Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'

ESV **Job 28:20** "From where, then, does wisdom come? And where is the place of understanding? ... ²³ God understands the way to it, and he knows its place.... ²⁸ And he said to man, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding.'"

ESV **Proverbs 2:1** My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, ² making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; ³ yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, ⁴ if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, ⁵ then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. ⁶ For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; ⁷ he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk in integrity, ⁸ guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of his saints.

ESV **Proverbs 3:7** Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.

ESV **Proverbs 9:10** The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.

A couple examples...

ESV **1 Kings 3:27** Then the king answered and said, "Give the living child to the first woman, and by no means put him to death; she is his mother." ²⁸ And all Israel heard of the judgment that the king had rendered, and they stood in awe of the king, because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him to do justice.

ESV **Proverbs 26:4** Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself. ⁵ Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes.

A New Testament wrinkle...

ESV **1 Corinthians 1:20** Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹ For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. ²² For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

ESV **James 3:13** Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. ¹⁵ This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual,

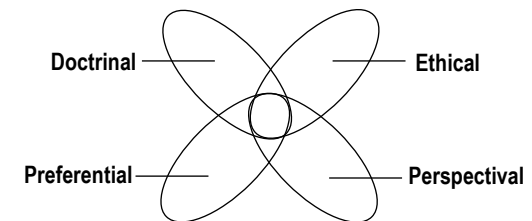
demonic. ¹⁶ For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. ¹⁷ But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸ And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

How is wisdom related to disagreement?

Wisdom is able to recognize (discern) that not all disagreements are the same, and not every person I may disagree with is the same, and thus conducts itself appropriate to the matter and the relationship.

How?

By recognizing different categories



ESV **Romans 13:8** Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹ The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

By recognizing different degrees

(Albert Mohler)

First level: those that are the most central and essential (e.g. the Trinity, the full deity and humanity of Jesus Christ, etc.)

Second level: those that are "second-order issues" where disagreements create boundaries among believers (e.g. meaning and mode of baptism)

Third level: those issues where Christians may disagree on but yet remain in close fellowship (e.g. views on eschatology)

(Gavin Ortlund)

First-rank: essential to the Gospel itself

Second-rank: urgent for the health and practice of the church

Third-rank: important to Christian theology

Fourth-rank: unimportant to our gospel witness and ministry collaboration

(Brad Millette)

Level One Issues: Soteriology—affects the person's ability to be saved;

determines whether the person is saved or not, whether they are Christians or not

Level Two Issues: Sanctification—affects the person's progressive sanctification; determines the person's ability to mature and grow in Christ