

## **“Meet in the Middle”**

In 1991 Diamond Rio recorded a great song, “Meet in the Middle.” The chorus says:

I’d start walking your way, You’d start walking mine,  
We’d meet in the middle, ‘Neath that old Georgia pine.  
We’d gain a lot of ground, ‘Cause we’d both give a little,  
And there ain’t no road too long, When you meet in the middle.

The Christian family is quite similar. There are many things in the life of a local congregation where, for the love of one another, we “meet in the middle.”

Let’s be perfectly clear, in **doctrinal** matters we do **not** meet in the middle, not with one another and not with God! We simply do whatever necessary to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, (1 Peter 2:21). But in matters of opinion, we have as our goal to meet in the middle, or even walk to the other end of the line for a brother or sister in Christ.

The classic passage in this regard is Romans 14, wherein God’s commands to His kids are quite clear, **“in matters of opinion.”** Verse one, **“Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions,” (NASB).** Yes, it’s quite clear!

We are so blessed here at Pine Valley to be in a church family where that is not an issue. But in some congregations and brotherhood wide, it is often an issue. Check the wording again, “Now accept the one who is weak in the faith...” The command is to accept him! The command includes not, “passing judgment on his opinions.” The matter of judging **opinions** is, in context, discussed in verses 4-13 and the outcome is shown in verses 14-23 (the possible destruction of a brother simply because of **opinions!**)

Not judging opinions is usually tougher than it seems at first. Weak or insecure people feel often feel dis-respected or even rejected if someone disagrees with their opinions. *That* is part of the weakness. Love, acceptance, affirmation and encouragement must bridge the gap. Those processes are the very ways each of us walk to meet in the middle! From the context, some eat certain things, some don’t. Maybe you are a vegan and I eat meat at every meal. Maybe you don’t eat pork and I do. Maybe you don’t attend a Diamond Rio concert and I do. Maybe you don’t get the vaccine and I do. I’ve even seen disagreements about what *kind* of unleavened bread to use in communion. Years ago one congregation in Texas had a major problem over whether or not it is a sin to not have a tablecloth on the communion table!

Again, to be clear, this is about matters of opinion, not immutable doctrines. We are **commanded to judge** in matters of doctrine (read John 7:24). But we must accept others if the matter is one of opinions (Romans 14).

Satan will always tempt Christians to argue about opinions and ignore doctrines. He loves it when he can use his lies to separate Christians from one another because he knows a fellowship, “... of three strands is not quickly torn apart,” Ecclesiastes 4:12. Blessed be the tie that binds, and that glue pours from the bottle of Romans 14.

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