

Hello Bro. Hare,

I am seeking information of a peaceful way to lessen the fallout from a brother that is needs to be removed from his preaching throne at a small congregation in (city not named). The congregation has never had a full-time minister. The current brother was supposed to be the spiritual leader until a stronger minister was located. However, over the last twenty years there weren't any real attempt to seek a full time minister to replace him. This lack of drive has lead to the current problem of most of the members leaving for different reasons.

Recently, a group of the church members have asked for outside help a preacher from (another area) to help get the congregation back on track. This move has lead to deeper division between the preacher and his wife and the group. At this point, I'm thinking that court actions may be needed to resolve this situation between the brother, his wife and the few members that are remaining at the meeting place.

Finally, I was thinking about getting a three or four of the members to sign their intent for a lawyer to use in the court hearing of the small group wishes. But, I am praying that you may have a more - just way to get the brother to step-aside without being hurt.

Reply

There is a far deeper problem here than the preacher. Given that this situation has persisted for the pass twenty years it is evident there is something wrong within the membership (a lack of strong men of leadership character). According to 1 Corinthians 6:1-8, a Christian is not to civilly file a lawsuit against another Christian in a secular court of law. Rather, the disputed matter should be arbitrated or judged by a wise Christian or Christians. When difficulties arise, the scripture teaches how each party is to act to heal the wrong or to obviate its evil influences and to bring good out of it to those who are willing to obey God. I would recommend seeking out a Christian lawyer, retired Christian judge, or other professionally trained Christian mediator to negotiate and/or adjudicate, and seek resolution.

Congregations of the Lord's church must be united and act as one under the rule of the scripture. The Bible is very clear concerning God's instructions to the Body of believers to come together and allow the word of God to settle every matter. Not even the Jews used the secular courts. Rather, in those times, the Jews utilized Jewish arbitrators.

To abandon or throw out the authority of God at this juncture opens the door that will lead to the setting aside of scriptural authority for all other matters in the future.

Many congregations of the Lord's church today are forsaking the pure instruction of the scripture for personal feelings that are the result of being puffed up with pride. Now, for there to be disputes in a congregation of this temperament, and especially over the pulpit, is appalling and, that they should go to law is an abomination. It must be said, for a Christian to do this before unbelievers, is extremely disgraceful and wicked. If the minister and his group are at fault, the congregation should do as the scripture instructs in Acts 15:1-35. No other course of action should be necessary.

Please remember, there are two key lessons that arise from how the scripture instructs us to handle church conflict. First, we must make sure that the essence of the gospel was not compromised. Second, the congregation preserved its unity. The Scriptures themselves exhort Christians to hold fast to the faith delivered by word as well as by letter. When Paul was instructing the Thessalonians, he directed them to "hold the teachings that you have learned, whether by word or by letter of ours" (II Thess. 2:15). Let's stay with the scripture. Let every Christian understand, God's glory is great gain. Brother, even if you fail to obtain dispute resolution within the congregation or by private Christian arbitration and, after prayer and careful consideration, you decide to suffer the material or financial loss rather than cause shame to the cause of Christ by suing publicly, remember this: "Anyone who accepts wrong for the sake of God's glory will not come out the loser." Recall that Jesus suffered wrongly for us, to the glory of God (1 Peter 3:18, Philippians 2:5-11). "It is far better to lose position, status or financially than to lose spiritually." It is "better to suffer wrong than to do wrong." 1 Peter 2:18-25. Brethren, let's follow after the scripture as it is stated in 2 Peter 1:10 "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall."