

Church Disagreements

12-28-14 AM

Design of the church: the church was designed to handle disagreements.

No matter how well we get along with the brethren in the local church, at some point, we are going to run into a matter on which we disagree. Perhaps it will be something simple, such as a church tradition or practice. We may not like the meeting time, or the color paint on the walls, or the way that the services are ordered. Perhaps it is something that we might hold to be important, but not entirely so. Something that we might call a "Romans 14" matter, something that we might need to yield to someone else on for the sake of their conscience. Or perhaps we are speaking about a disagreement of great importance, over doctrine or practice, that we fear souls are being lost because of the way we conduct the church.

The point is this: if we do not handle church disagreements properly, church division can result. The Bible speaks volumes to the matter of church division. It is wholeheartedly condemned, and if you are the one who causes it, you are in grave danger. **DO NOT LET YOUR OPINION COST YOUR SOUL.**

What do we do when we disagree with the church? First, we need to ascertain the level of our disagreement. While everything seems important to us personally, we need to have the spiritual maturity to determine if our grievance is really as important as we believe. If it is simply a matter of our opinion on a non-spiritual matter, we need to readily say that it is **NOT IMPORTANT**, certainly not if it may cause hurt feelings.

Second, if our opinion is one of spiritual matter, we need to discern if it is worth discussing. If we hold a belief that we know is not a matter of faith, and it is known to cause dissention, we need to keep our belief to ourselves. If it is one that might be shared without controversy, then we may be able to share it as long as we are not causing others to stumble. When we disagree but it is not important, it might be best to remain quite.

Third, when it is truly a matter of faith, of truth and of right and wrong, we need to ascertain the best way to approach it. Is it a matter of personal sin? Then it needs to follow the pattern set forth in Matthew 18. Is it a matter of public sin? Then it needs to be handled publically, per Galatians 2, and by the elders. Is it a matter of sin by the elders? Then too we have a scriptural pattern of how to proceed in 1 Timothy 5.

Fourth, there are times where our disagreements are because of sin. There is a clear pattern of how to deal with someone who has sinned. First, if that sin was personal (against us), we are told the means to resolve it in Matthew 18:15-18. If it is a public sin, then we see that in Galatians 2 Paul publically confronted Peter (public sin requires public confession). Finally, we see that when an elder (or presumably any worker of the church) sins in such a manner, it too is resolved publically (1 Timothy 5).

What do we do if it cannot be resolved? Too many jump ship at the first sign of trouble, but this is **NOT A** scriptural pattern. We are to be patient (II Tim 2), and continue in prayer on the issue. It may be we cannot continue in membership (**CAREFUL** - don't use the word fellowship, I John 1) with this local body. We need to consider that it is more important that we are not contentious for the faith when we intend to be contending for it.