

What Is The Difference Between Sowing Discord & Calling Out Wrong-doing & Wrong-doers?

If you dump into the “Sowing Discord Bucket”

- appropriate and needed disagreement
- passionate disagreement and dissent
- an exposing wrong-doing and/or wrong-doers
- the confrontation of any and all members and leaders
- biblical argument
- the rebuke of wrong-doers
- the challenging those in position or power
- the exposing the actions of the church officers or leaders of the church

. . . . then most any and all attempts to call people and/or leaders of the church to account are off limits!

You cannot merely quote Proverbs 6:16-19

These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him:

- 1- a proud look,
- 2 - a lying tongue, and
- 3 - hands that shed innocent blood,
- 4 - An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations,
- 5 - feet that be swift in running to mischief,
- 6 - A false witness that speaketh lies, and
- + _____
- 7 - he that soweth discord among brethren.**

In typical Hebrew poetic fashion, *the six things are the manifestations of the seventh.*

This weighty admonition is not a catch-all to condemn and thereby dismiss all forms of controversy in a church. Such a twisting of this passage, and others, is not only a gross *mis*application to all forms of contention, but has become one of the bullets sprayed about when pastors and leadership is challenged.

Now, let me pose some questions which bring to light the difficulty of calling broad-stroking most any form of disagreement as “sowing discord among the brethren. In fact, the following questions will not only reveal the complex nature of sweeping all dissent, disagreement, or discussion into the sinful bucket called “sowing discord.”

These hypothetical, but realistic questions may well leave you as a church member with no ability say or do anything – but vote on it as a member – which may be abridged as well?

Here goes

If a member of a local church ministry, ardently disagrees with a policy, decision, or action, and

- addressed his disagreement and dissent to only the pastor(s) and deacons, is he “sowing discord?”
- not only shared his dissent and disagreement with the pastor(s) and/or deacons, but also with another friends or member of the church, is that sowing discord?
- talked to a close member or friend to get another vantage and/or some feedback as to his own thinking before addressing the pastor(s) and/or deacons? Who, at the end had his concerns and disagreements dismissed. Is that “sowing discord?”
- talked with others on the church pastoral staff aside from the Lead pastor, is that sowing discord?
- shared his disagreements with another member who already and also had identical reasons and concerns, is that “sowing discord”
- shared his disagreements with another member who already and also had different concerns and reasons for his/her disagreements, is that “sowing discord”
- spoke to one of the deacons, several of the deacons, or all of the deacons individually and privately about his/her dissatisfaction and/or ardent dissent? Is that sowing discord?
- someone asks him/her as to his/her thinking and thoughts, is that member allowed to speak to the question, or unless he is quiet it is considered “sowing discord?”
- never discusses his dissent about a policy, action, or decision with any of the pastors or deacons, but stands up during a business meeting at which it is being presented, and argues against such a policy change, is he sowing discord?
- speaks to his family members, his/her spouse, and/or grown children, and/or “out of his house” family units, is that sowing discord?

- If in a personal and private office discussion between a member and a pastor concerning a policy, action, or decision, both the member and the pastor were offended by the words, the spirit, the tone, the unfairness of some comments, and/or the lack of kindness, could that member or the pastor be *ultimately* be subject to removal from the membership of the church if he refused to or saw nothing for which to apologize (Matthew 18)?
- If a member engaged in a passionate argument with a pastor(s) and deacon(s), personally and privately in the church office and feelings were hurt, offense was taken (real or imagined), and there were sharp differences and words like that which existed between Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15), could that member, pastor or deacon *ultimately* be subject to removal from the membership of the church if he refused to apologize and/or saw nothing sinful in his comments (Matthew 18)?
- Are only the pastor(s) and deacons allowed to discuss a policy change, decision, actions, or people with each other, but all other members of the church are not allowed to discuss such with a trusted friend(s) or a member(s) of the ministry?

What ever constitutes “sowing discord” constitutes

“Sowing Discord” can not be the silencing of disagreement or dissent, the stopping of any and all discourse about what members of a church think and even believe to be wrong-headed-to-wrong-doing.

“Sowing Discord” must not be defined in such a way as to include “calling out” wrongdoing and wrong-doers at any level of power and position (I Kings 18:17-18 / Galatians 2:22 / Acts 15).

“Sowing Discord” must not be defined in such a way as to include “calling out” wrongdoing and wrong-doers personally, and even to call them out publicly (II Samuel 12:2ff).

“Sowing Discord” must not be defined in such a way as to include “calling out” wrongdoing and wrong-doers directly, personally, and publicly with ardent and strident words of rebuke which hurt and wound (Proverbs 27:6).

“Sowing Discord” must not be defined in such a way as to include directly and personally engaging in passionate, unpleasant, extended, or painful argument (Proverbs 27:6; Acts 15:7; Acts 15:39).

“Sowing Discord” must not be defined in such a way as to include repeatedly, directly, and personally engaging in passionate argument with any and all the members of leadership who resist doing the right thing, refuse to even listen to the disagreement, resist and refuse to address and correct wrong-doing, and/or refuse to even hear the truth of the matter.

“Sowing Discord” must not be defined in such a way as to include directly and personally rebuking, confronting, challenging, and/or correcting wrong-doers and wrong-doing, about not only policy, but how they seek to implement a policy, and how they handle dissenters.

“Sowing Discord” must not be defined in such a way as to include directly and personally rebuking, confronting, passionately challenging, and/or correcting wrong-doers and wrong-doing, even to where it rightfully hurts, stings, and smarts.

Whatever “sowing discord” is, it does not mean and can not include the use and abuse of Scripture as a weapon, as a means of retaliation, as a club to silence those who have fair, honest, sincere, genuine, ardent, and strong differences and disagreements — concerning not only what was proposed (a policy decisions), how it was proposed (policy implementation), and/or how dissent is handled (the treatment of those who dissent).

What Is Sowing Discord Among The Brethren?

I would maintain that such a charge of “sowing discord among the brethren” takes more than can be accessed by the observation or participation in of a passionate and/or heavy argument. It has to go to the heart, the motivation, the issues, the purpose.

That does not mean that there are no fair-minded indicators. But it does mean that one cannot bandy about such a charge and abuse the Scriptures and/or people by making such an accusation. What would be some fair indicators?

√ **Petty:** If the comments being made are petty, trifling, picayune it *may be* more about sowing discord than addressing a serious concern.

√ **Unconnected:** If many of the comments are unconnected to and outside of the actual issue which is being seriously addressed.

√ **Twisting Of The Truth:** If the comments being made are inaccurate, a misrepresentation of the facts, cherry-picking, or involves blatant lies.

√ **Personally Motivated:** If the disagreement and dissent is not about what is being discussed or argued, but is a cover for a much more personal and addressed or unaddressed offense.

√ **Ad Hominem:** “Against the Man” comments which does not address the issue, but seeks to change the attention to the person. When comments are made, which focus on “who,” rather than the actual issue at stake, we are no longer seeking to resolve meaningful concerns, but are engaged in a personal attack.

Now obviously, if the issue at the forefront is the immoral, criminal, unethical, or ungodly behavior of that person, it is not an “ad hominem” argument.

√ **Nuanced & Disingenuous:** If the discussion or disagreement is marked by “nuanced” comments, it may be about sowing discord. “Nuanced” comments are comments which are technically true only because of the careful selection of the words chosen. Such nuanced words are used to remake and rewrite what has actually taken place, and yet be technically accurate.

√ **Restrained:** If there is an attempt to bring people into the discussion, issue, or controversy who have no knowledge of, and/or are not party to, and or have no need to know about the disagreement.

Now obviously, there are times and places when others *may* become involved, whether it is for honest counsel, or private and personal feedback, mediation, or adjudication.

Those who want to sow discord are those who are anxious to involve others and are looking for the opportunity to “go public” or to “go-privately-public.” There are members, church leaders, and pastors who lack the self-control to keep an issue as private and biblically contained.

√ **Directed:** There is an understood biblical responsibility to directly address the one(s) who is the person(s) behind a decision, action, wrong-doing, policy, or events – first – before involving those who are not involved in it.

There is a lot of gamesmanship when it comes to this – be assured! As previous stated, it is not that you have no right *to sincerely and genuinely* seek the counsel of a friend or two to help determine whether your response and/or thinking is on track.

√ **Factual:** Is what you are specifically addressing established factually. Rumor, innuendo, hearsay, scuttlebutt, speculation, or “gossip” [1]

That does not mean you need all the facts, but it does mean that you do need all the relevant facts!

I am sure that I do not know ALL OF THE FACTS about the present scandal involving Jerry Falwell, Jr. However, the many other facts are not at all relevant if indeed the fact of his sexual immorality is known to be true – “Yea, but you did not know how this all began and how his wife contributed”

√ **Yours:** I am certain that there are yet other indicators, and I am sure that you could add others. If you are so inclined, feel free to provide me with others and/or to push-back on any of the ones I have listed!

You are not a “sower of discord” if you are calling-out wrong-doing and wrong-doers, if you are standing up for what’s biblical correct.

It is a right conscience, which loves institution of “the church,” as well as the people who make it up, which will expose and rebuke those in power and position, even if it becomes uncomfortable.

Sincerely identifying issues of significant and meaningful concern is not “sowing discord.” The discord has been sown by those who have engaged in biblical wrong-doing in regards to such issues as. . .

- policy, or
- doctrinal beliefs, or
- the rights of a congregation
- the methods of instituting change
- secrecy and concealing decisions
- the handling of people who disagree and dissent, or
- the covering or concealing of sexual immorality
- the abuse of power
- the excessive wielding of authority

*Standing up for “the church,”
and refusing to
“go along, to get along,”
is a good fight!*



1. “Gossip” is another word which involves a lot of gamesmanship. If the rumors are untrue, it is gossip. However, if it is *true* that ministry leader “X” has indeed been caught viewing pornography or in an adult book store, or arrested by the police at 2 a.m. for DU (Oh yes that happens) and I tell that to a fellow member of “the church” is that gossip? Is it “gossip” if it is true and the deacons discuss it?

