

John Bevere Answers: 'Should I Leave My Church?'

I'm often asked, "When should I leave a church or ministry team? How bad does it have to get?"

I respond, "Who sent you to the church you presently attend?"

The majority of the time they answer, "God did."

"If God sent you," I reply, "do not leave until God releases you. If the Lord is silent, He is often saying, 'Don't change a thing. Do not leave. Stay where I have placed you!'"

When God does instruct you to leave, you will go out with peace, no matter what the condition of the ministry: "For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace" Is. 55:12, KJV). Therefore, your departure will not be based on the actions or behavior of others but rather on the Spirit's leading.

So **leaving a ministry** is not based on how bad things are. To leave with an offended or critical spirit is not the plan of God. It is reacting rather than acting on His guidance. Romans 8:14 (NKJV) says, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God."

Notice it does not say, "For as many as react to difficult situations, these are sons of God."

Almost every time the word *son* is used in the New Testament, it comes from the two Greek words *teknon* and *huios*. A good definition for the word *teknon* is "one who is a son by mere fact of birth."

When my first son, Addison, was born, he was John Bevere's son by mere fact that he came from my wife and me. When he was in the nursery in the midst of all the other newborns, you

could not recognize him as my son by personality. When friends and family came to visit, they could not pick him out except by the nametag above his crib. He did not possess anything that set him apart. Addison would be considered a *teknon* of John and Lisa Bevere.

We find *teknon* used in Romans 8:15–16. It says that because we have received the spirit of adoption, “the Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children [*teknon*] of God.” When a person receives Jesus Christ as Lord, he is a child of God by fact of the new birth experience. (See John 1:12.)

The other Greek word translated *sons* in the New Testament is *huios*. Many times it is used in the New Testament to describe “one who can be identified as a son because he displays the character or characteristics of his parents.” As my son Addison grew, he started looking and acting like his father. When Addison was 6, Lisa and I took a trip and left him with my parents. My mother told my wife that Addison was almost a carbon copy of his daddy. His personality was like mine when I was his age. As he has grown, he has become more like his dad. He now can be recognized as John Bevere’s son, not only by the fact of his birth but also by the characteristics and a personality that resemble his father’s.

So, to put it simply, the Greek word *teknon* means “babies or immature sons,” and the Greek word *huios* is most often used to describe “mature sons.”

Looking at Romans 8:14 again, it reads: “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons [*huios*] of God.” We can see clearly here that it is the mature sons who are led by the Spirit of God.

Immature Christians are less likely to follow the leading of the Spirit of God. Most often they react or respond emotionally or intellectually to circumstances they face. They

have not yet learned to act only on the Spirit of God's leading.

As Addison grows, he will progress in character development. The more mature he becomes, the more responsibility I will entrust to him. It is wrong for him to stay immature. It is not God's will that we remain babies.

One way the character of Addison has grown is by facing difficult situations. When he started school, he met up with some "bullies." I heard some of the things these rough kids were doing and saying to my son, and I wanted to go and deal with it. But I knew that would be wrong. For me to intervene would hinder Addison's growth.

So my wife and I continued to counsel him at home, preparing him to face the persecutions at school. He grew in character through obeying our counsel in the midst of his suffering.

This is similar to what God does with us. The Bible says, "Though He [Jesus] was a Son [*Huios*], yet *He learned obedience by the things which He suffered*" (Heb. 5:8, emphasis added).

Physical growth is a function of time. No 2-year-old child has ever been 6 feet tall. Intellectual growth is a function of learning. Spiritual growth is a function of neither time nor learning, but rather of obedience. Now look at what Peter says: "Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for *he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin*" (1 Pet. 4:1, emphasis added).

A person who has ceased from sin is a perfectly obedient child of God. He is mature. He chooses God's ways, not his own. Just as Jesus learned obedience by the things He suffered, we learn obedience by the difficult circumstances we face. When we obey the Word of God that is spoken by the Holy Spirit, we will grow and mature in times of conflict and suffering.

Our knowledge of Scripture is not the key. Obedience is.

Now we understand one reason why we have people in the church who have been Christians for 20 years, who can quote verses and chapters of the Bible, who have heard a thousand sermons and have read many books but still wear spiritual diapers. Every time they meet with difficult situations, rather than responding by the Spirit of God, they seek to protect themselves in their own way. They are “always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Tim. 3:7). They never come to the knowledge of the truth because they do not apply it.

Truth must be allowed to have its way in our lives if we are going to grow and mature. It is not enough to give mental assent to truth without obeying it. Even though we continue to learn, we never mature because of disobedience.

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