

The Biblical Way to Disagree With Your Pastor

My disposition has been noted on more than one occasion by others and by me.

I love pastors. I respect pastors. I honor pastors.

In the course of a week, someone will note the occasional outlier. They will point out the negatives of pastors. They don't take care of the members. They are in it for the money. They are dictators and bullies. They don't lead. And on and on and on.

Of course, anytime you look at nearly 400,000 people, you can certainly find the bad apples in the batch. It seems like some church members make it the goal of their lives to focus on the negatives of pastors. We have a few of those who show up on this blog.

But this one thing I know: most pastors are godly and honorable leaders. They love their church members. They love their communities. They love their families. They love the God they serve.

Are pastors infallible? Of course not. You know as well as I that no pastor is perfect. They will make mistakes. They will have a bad day. They will get frustrated.

Should you, then, disagree with your pastor? Should you confront these leaders with something they have done wrong? Should you point out their omissions? Let me respond by offering 10 guidelines for you to consider.

1. **Pray first.** OK, this one is obvious. In the heat of the moment, this one can be obviously forgotten too.
2. **Understand the frequency of the criticism issue.** Look at

this example. If your church's average worship attendance is 100, you likely have around 200 active members ("active" defined loosely). If every church member took the liberty to disagree or criticize the pastor once a year, your pastor would be dealing with a critic two of every three days.

3. **Understand the negative magnification issue.** If you are disagreeing with or criticizing your pastor, you obviously understand the humanity of pastors. They aren't perfect people. And though they would hope otherwise, most of them will obsess over your criticism. For many of them, one criticism has a ten times greater impact than one praise or compliment.
4. **Make sure it is absolutely necessary.** If this issue is one of preference or not getting something your way, drop it. Your criticism will likely do a lot more harm than good.
5. **Don't begin with, "I love you pastor, but ..."** Most pastors will only hear everything after the "but." The prefatory phrase will typically be perceived as insincere.
6. **Don't say, "People are saying ..."** Speak for yourself, not the cowards in anonymity. Any leader should discount or ignore "people are saying" criticisms.
7. **Don't express your disagreement on a Sunday.** Don't criticize pastors right before or after they preach. In fact, hold off all disagreements for a day other than Sunday. If you wait a day or two, the urgency to criticize may go away.
8. **Make clear you want to hear the pastor's perspective.** Too many disagreements are pet peeves or personal preferences. If you have a sincere and serious disagreement, you will want to hear the pastor's perspective. Listen as much as speaking, if not more.
9. **Seek to be a part of the solution.** Criticizing and stating negatives are easy. Most of us are adept in finding problems. If you really care about your church

and your pastor, you will be willing to offer a solution and to be part of the solution.

10. **Pray again.** If you have made the move toward disagreeing with your pastor, pray after the fact. Pray for your pastor. Pray for yourself. Pray for your words to be received well. Pray for your church.

I was in conversation with a pastor called to ministry from the business world. His call was genuine, I am sure, but he admitted he was a frequent critic of his pastors before he became one.

“I often knew a better way, and I wasn’t hesitant to let my pastors know,” he said. “Now that I am on the other side, I cannot believe how insensitive and even ungodly I was. The life of a pastor is so stressful. If I only knew then ...”

Indeed. {eo}

Thom S. Rainer is the founder and CEO of Church Answers, an online community and resource for church leaders. Prior to founding Church Answers, he served as president and CEO of LifeWay Christian Resources. Among his greatest joys are his family: his wife, Nellie Jo; three sons, Sam, Art and Jess; and 10 grandchildren. Dr. Rainer can be found on Twitter @ThomRainer and at

For the original article, visit .