

Should I Confront My Pastor?

Readers sometimes write in and ask me if I think it is a good idea for them to have a meeting and confront a controlling pastor regarding his abusive behavior. These readers hope to facilitate a type of “intervention” where they can attempt to show such a man the error of his ways and try to motivate him to repent and change. Although this may sound like a worthy endeavor, there are some very important reasons to *not* do so unless you are properly prepared. Consider the following:

First, regarding the question itself, “Should I confront my pastor?” I want to point out that the terms “my” and “pastor” really do not apply to an authoritarian dictator who passes himself off as an under-shepherd of Christ. Such a man is not operating as a genuine pastor at all and is therefore nobody's actual pastor. This is a great irony since these type leaders flood the pulpits of modern churches and multitudes of members consider these men “their” pastors. That said, let us move on.

Christians are certainly free to have a meeting with an errant leader, but sadly these type of churchmen are almost never open to any change whatsoever regarding their leadership methodologies and they are usually pretty clever at twisting the Scriptures to make their challenger feel totally ungodly for even daring to question them.

No Ears To Hear

A controlling dictator by default usually thinks of the congregation, including his staff, as being *beneath him* and as not being “worthy” enough to bring the Scriptures to him, or not of a high enough “rank” spiritually or ecclesiastically to “speak into” his life. He will typically claim that he will only “hear” from other similar “Senior Pastors” and of course those men won't correct him either because they are all from the same ilk and are cut from the same cloth.

It is also not uncommon for such a leader to operate in massive narcissistic self-importance and incorrectly thinking of himself as a “Moses” who is receiving instruction directly from God and therefore is not to be questioned or disobeyed. So a man like this will almost invariably be closed off to what you have to say.

The False “Touch Not God's Anointed” Doctrine

Not surprisingly, controlling “pastors” often profess that they are “anointed” and that you are not anointed and so they often invoke the popular “touch not God's anointed” false doctrine to try to discourage would-be challengers from questioning their alleged authority. In order to justify this line of thinking, they misinterpret and misapply the totally unrelated Old Testament account of David and Saul, which clearly shows that they think of themselves as a *king* and think of you as a lesser who is trying to do them harm by merely questioning and correcting them. Of course this is nonsense. David respected Saul and was determined not to harm (touch) him *physically* (see 1Sam 26:11). This has nothing to do with dealing with *doctrinal* error today. This is not some

kind of proof that it is wrong to confront and expose the error of a leader. In fact, ironically, David did correct Saul and he did point out his error (v. 18-20).

Also, the Bible says, “...*the anointing which you have received of Him abides in you...*” (1John 2:27)

To gain even more insight, let's consider this verse in fuller context:

These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which you have received of him abides in you, and you need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teaches you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it has taught you, you shall abide in Him. And now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at his coming. 1 John 2:26-28

We can gain an even larger context of 1John 2:27 by reading a little earlier on in the chapter, where we see that the passage above is written to “fathers”, “young men” and “little children” (see verse 12-14), which essentially means to *all* Christians. This is not written as being something exclusive to pastors / elders. These verses show us that all Christians are anointed, not just pastors. So even within their out-of-context view of the account of David and Saul, these leaders should at least *not* be “touching” you either with their mistreatment and abuses. But of course it almost never works out that way because, regardless of their claims to the contrary, men like this do not truly recognize and acknowledge the basic *equality* of all believers (where while we may have differing roles, we are all equally important). This passage also shows us that we do not even need these men to teach us. God is ultimately our teacher who teaches us through His written Word as illuminated by the Holy Spirit.

There May Be a Significant Risk

Probably something even more important to understand than everything said so far is that having a confrontational meeting with an errant church leader can be a *very risky endeavor* because many such “pastors” are often extremely well trained and/or skilled at “corrective measures” or “damage control”. They are usually quite adept at turning and re-corralling their income-producing sheep back securely inside their pens. So be forewarned that unless you are very strong in standing your ground regarding *genuine biblical church authority* (the type of material found at my website), such a man could easily spin you around and turn you towards incorrectly thinking that *you* are being rebellious and that *you* are the one who is in the wrong for daring to question him and not blindly submitting to whatever he commands. This is not an uncommon result of such meetings. These men are usually far more skilled at bringing and “defending” their false doctrine than the average Christian is at bringing and defending true doctrine. So it is very common for a beaten down and abused Christian, who has finally gotten up enough strength to barely get one foot out the door of a bad church, to then request such a meeting only to be quickly recaptured and shackled once again to his or her seat.

Controlling pastors are also usually ready for confrontations with full guns loaded. They see questioning and correction as a challenge to their so-called autonomous authority which they are determined to protect. They typically use fear, manipulation, threats, etc. to try to convince you

that you are wrong and they are right. They will probably tell you that they have “heard it all before”. They will likely marginalize you, minimize your concerns and make you feel like a rebel, like an unfaithful dime-a-dozen type member that they have “dealt with before”.

Also, when these men sense that you may be leaving *their* church, they will typically claim that you need their “release” or “permission” before you can do so. Not only is this a lie (the Bible simply does not teach this), not surprisingly, such permission is rarely if ever granted, especially if you are a significant giver financially and/or are someone who volunteers a lot of their time. In that case you would likely be too valuable to them to lose and they would fight all the harder to keep you, not because they love you of course, but because they need and want the resources that you bring to the table. Don't forget, to them you are not a person, your value is merely as a *human resource* for them to put to work in furthering their own agenda. So while they may easily be able to afford to lose a “non-core” member, they may not be able to afford to lose you if you are a major contributor in one way or another. Therefore the closer you are to the “inner circle” the harder they will typically fight and the more manipulation they will employ to try to keep you. I have also seen men like this not fight at all to keep non-core, non-income producing, non-volunteering members who question their teachings. They often considering non conforming members like this to be nothing more than a time-wasting nuisance and so they are happy to grant them permission to leave the church.

The truth is you don't need anyone's permission to leave the so-called “care” of such a man. And don't fall for the similar “pastor as your covering” lie. The Lord is our *sole* covering (hedge of protection), never a mere mortal man. Oh the limits that these ungodly men will push to try to make it seem like they have even God-like attributes and qualities!

So unless you have the *goods*, and the goods are a *working understanding* of what the Bible *really* teaches on the subject of authority and control in the local church, then you put yourself at risk of collapsing under the pressure of the trickery of these men and succumbing to their views. Time and time again we see those who try to meet with and correct authoritarian pastors often just end up right back where they started or even worse off. I know very few Christians who have the knowledge of the Scriptures and the discernment required to battle and withstand this kind of well-engineered emotional onslaught.

My Advice

My advice, based on the Scriptures (and my experience) is this:

Once you recognize that you are dealing with a control-based leader, don't bother trying to talk with him, just leave. Control is a very intoxicating drug that affects both the controller and those who are being controlled, and so it is almost impossible to help these men or help their blinded minions, except possibly from well outside the situation.

Don't make the mistake of thinking of yourself as being on some mercy mission from God as if you will be the first person on earth who has warned such a man. It is likely that others, perhaps even many others have gone before you and have tried to talk some sense into him to no avail and probably even to their own detriment. God doesn't send His sheep to the slaughter. God

wants us to first be educated (biblically literate), prepared and ready for spiritual battles like this before jumping in, so that we can defend the faith, defend the Scriptures and firmly stand our ground.

In the mean time and regardless of whether or not you are prepared for such a battle, you really need to *get off of the tyrant's turf* and get back to your own home turf where it is far safer for you and where you can diligently study and gain strength without being subverted by a false “church life”. It is very easy to get totally sucked back into the subtle nuances of a cult-like system when you try to work from *within* that system. This is one of the main reasons why it is so important to obey God's command to come out and be separate.

And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? for you are the temple of the living God; as God has said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. 2Cor 6:16-18

You might not understand exactly why obeying this passage is so vital now, but if you come out and study, you will likely eventually see how monumentally important it was to GET OUT OF THERE! I also know from experience that taking this critical step is one of the main reasons that I have been free and able to study unhindered and grow in more and more discernment over these years. You just can't see the big picture and make the right decisions when you are too close to a problem of this magnitude and are blinded and compromised by its many seductions.

The bottom line is that almost without exception, there is simply no fixing a bad church that is being controlled by an unrepentant tyrant, especially when the members not only allow this behavior, but defend and protect this man and his “right” to abuse them. Such a system usually needs to be discarded not reformed. So until a dictator and the people who support him repent, it pretty much doesn't matter what you say to such a man. He wants to be king and the people want a king. It's a lose-lose situation. There's nothing that can be done short of a miracle from heaven. And since God is not in the business of circumventing people's free will and forcing them do things that they don't want to do, don't hold your breath expecting any improvement.

Finally, an onlooker only needs to see the dry lifeless bodies of flies in a pile on the ground to know that there is probably a spider somewhere close by. Don't be the next causality by remaining in the web of a control-based church. Get detached from this sticky mess now while you still can or you just might find yourself trapped in a silk cocoon.

-Paul Howey