



Wreaking Havoc in Ministry

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

Psalm 1:1

I often wonder why people who say they are Christians and love the Lord cause so much havoc in church. I realize that God never promised his children that serving Him would be easy. From the start, I expected I would have to fight against Satan; however, I never in a million years thought I would have to fight with those who claimed they were Christians.

How is it that people can sit in church together, worship together, serve together, eat together, call each other brother and sister, but yet, work against each other causing division within the Kingdom?

In my book, *A 21st Century Deaf Ministry -From a Biblical Perspective*, I wrote the following:

If there is a conflict that needs to be resolved between you and another member of the team, you should talk to your teammate before discussing it with someone else or clinging to ill feelings. Nothing breaks down team dynamic quicker than gossip or unexpressed disappointment. Matthew 18:15-16 states, ***“If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’*** A simple conversation can clear up a misunderstanding. Failure to communicate can allow even the simplest misunderstanding to become a huge stumbling block between members in the ministry, impeding effective communication and the spread of the gospel.

The reason I included this excerpt in my book is because I witnessed constant conflict happening in Deaf ministries. Some of the conflicts were caused by individuals seeking position. Others were caused by individuals seeking attention. Some of the conflict was even caused by ministry workers who are just miserable and had no clue as to what it means to be Christian or Christ-like. Whatever the reason, these individuals seem to disregard the true purpose for being involved in ministry, and they lacked the proper skills necessary to resolve conflicts.

For an example of this behavior, let's say we have a deaf ministry in Kansas City, MO. The ministry consists of 12 deaf members and 7 interpreters. We will name the leader of the Deaf ministry Thomas (Tom). Tom isn't the best interpreter of the group but constantly seeks to improve his skills in American Sign Language and his knowledge of Deaf culture. One of the other interpreters has been a part of the ministry since its conception and really has a desire to lead the group. This member (and we shall name her Jane,) keeps her desires to lead a secret but criticizes everything that Tom does.

Jane has become quite the trouble-maker. She began a clique and started recruiting some of the newer members. Although a senior member of the interpreting team, Jane shows no respect for the ministry leader or other officers. She's very pessimistic and tries her best to embarrass Tom. This behavior is observed by not only the other interpreters, but also the deaf members. When asked about her behavior, Jane denies that she's negative and swears she's not trying to undermine Tom's leadership. Her behavior demonstrates just the opposite.

Tom, who tends to be a very peaceful guy, gets very frustrated and sometimes appears ready to give up. He often states he doesn't have the energy to fight the Devil and his human counterparts. Yet, he feels a sense of obligation to ensure the Deaf members receive the weekly messages. Tom is encouraged by those who truly follow the Word of God and those who intercede on his behalf.

While Tom doesn't fully understand why God called him into the leadership position, he remains obedient. Ministry members can see the call of God on Tom's life. Some also see the confusion caused by the two different personalities and constantly pray for unity. They recognize that the destructive behavior of one is merely an attempt to knock Tom out of the position God has assigned. They recognize that if both Tom and Jane worked together, they could be an incredible force against Satan's kingdom. Sadly, Jane doesn't see her actions as destructive and therefore has no desire to change.

While Tom and Jane are factitious characters used to illustrate my point, many deaf ministries face people like Tom and Jane on a weekly, if not daily, basis. Resolving the conflicts that arise can be challenging. To encourage those of you that might be experiencing adversities in ministry, in my book, "A 21st Century Deaf Ministry: from a Biblical Perspective," I have included a special chapter on teaming in a church setting called, "On the Winning T.E.A.M. In this chapter, I discuss what key elements are needed to make a ministry team a "winning team," one of which is conflict resolution.

Those of you who are experiencing conflict in ministry should consider yourselves fortunate and blessed. Before Satan can even approach you, he has to get permission, (Job 1:6-12). God granting that permission only means that He trusts you and He knows you can resist the Devil, resist giving in, and make a decision to "Win for Christ."

“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;”

Matthew 5:44

You may ask, “Why can’t it just be easy? Can’t we all just get along?” In Matthew 13:30, it states:

“Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.”

My response is “Do what you know you were called to do. Don’t worry about the haters.”. Remember you must bare your own cross. Each experience serves as a test of your faith. It also gives you an opportunity to stay before God in prayer, leaning not on your own understanding, but acknowledging Him in all of your ways. (Proverbs 3:5). The end promise of this scripture assures you that God will direct your path.

Encourage yourself and remember Romans 8:28. No matter how dark the path, know that as Christians, we have an expected end and “We Win!”

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