

RIGHT or WRONG? The loudmouth

November 30, 2007

Posted: 11/30/07

RIGHT or WRONG? The loudmouth

A member of our church consistently becomes rowdy—talking too much and loudly—during our business meetings. His behavior is extremely distracting, and some members have quit attending because they know he'll be there. Something needs to change, but how?

The issue you relate is one faced by many churches. Individuals like the one you have described are not rare. A friend of mine has suggested the person's name is Legion (meaning "many")!

I wish I could offer a simple—and guaranteed-to-work—answer. I can't. You have taken an important first step by realizing that something has to change. You cannot ignore the situation and hope it will go away. The longer you wait, the more likely Legion is to inflict long-term damage on your congregation. The decision made by some members to stop attending business meetings is an indication of the harm already done. Keep in mind your responsibility to be redemptive, both to Legion and the church.

[Previous Columns](#)

Begin with prayer—for Legion, for those who will take leadership in addressing the situation and for those who have stopped attending. Pray for wisdom and guidance in conversations that must occur. Pray for a spirit of reconciliation among all who are involved. Pray that God will help you understand why Legion acts as he does. Is he addressing substantive issues that need further dialogue and resolution? Or does he fit the description of a difficult church member as named by Brooks Faulkner in his book *Getting on Top of Your Work: Manual for the 21st Century Minister*? Difficult church members may: (1) “run right over you,” (2) feel “entitled to your preferential treatment,” (3) “talk your ear off,” (4) have “a temper like Mount St. Helens,” or (5) be “an unpleasable perfectionist.”

You may have to visit personally with Legion and express the concerns that have been raised. Seek common ground. Although Legion’s behavior may be inappropriate, he is expressing involvement and passion. He cares for his church.

Legion may never change, but don’t let him derail the church from its work. His behavior may be an attempt to use the congregation’s fear of conflict to impose his will on the church. Enlist the help of members who have quit attending. Visit with them, and help them realize others share their frustration. Encourage them not to allow one person to drive them away from participating in your church’s decision-making process.

Evaluate the procedures you use in business meetings. Set guidelines. Limit the amount of time and the number of times any one person can speak to an issue. Legion may perceive he is not being heard. His actions may be the way he assures he will not be ignored. Make sure your procedures are fair and everyone has a chance to speak.

David Morgan, pastor

Trinity Baptist Church, Harker Heights

Right or Wrong? is sponsored by the T.B. Maston Chair of Christian Ethics at Hardin-Simmons University's Logsdon School of Theology. Send your questions about how to apply your faith to btillman@hsutx.edu.

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Baptist churches, in Texas, the BGCT, the nation and around the world.