

Sowing and Reaping The Seeds of Discord

Prov 6:16-19 These six things the LORD hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him:

(17) A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood,

(18) a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil,

(19) a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren.

In 1981, Roger Faulkner had been a member of the Baptist Church in a Chicago suburb for nearly two years. He had served as a Sunday School teacher for more than a year when the position of superintendent became available. Roger was excited about Sunday School and felt that he would be an ideal successor to the position. He went to the pastor and shared his vision and desire to serve, but to his disappointment the pastor and church board later chose someone else to serve in that post.

Roger was very offended that he wasn't considered for the job, but didn't say anything to the pastor about it. As the weeks wore on, Roger became increasingly negative and critical toward the church and the people. He began to find fault with the new superintendent and the Sunday School program. He began attending services less and less.

Jeff Billings, another Sunday School teacher, began to notice something wrong with Roger. After church one Sunday, Jeff invited Roger out to lunch.

"Is everything Ok?" Jeff asked. "I've noticed that you've been absent a lot lately and I get the feeling that something is wrong."

"Yeah, you might say that," Roger said sarcastically. "I'm fed up with that stupid church and its immature leadership! The Sunday School program stinks and the pastor couldn't preach his way out of a paper bag! Most of the people here are unspiritual and unloving. I'm just not getting fed here anymore, and I'm thinking about leaving!"

Jeff was shocked. "I can't believe what I'm hearing! Just a few weeks ago you were so excited about the church. You used to brag to everyone that this was the greatest church in town. Just two months ago you told me that this was the most loving congregation you'd ever seen. What's happened to change you?"

"It's not me. It's the church that's changed," fumed Roger. "Besides the incompetence of the Sunday School program, let me tell you a few other things I'm upset about..."

For an hour, Jeff was amazed to hear Roger's complaints. For many weeks afterward, he met with Roger several more times, hoping to encourage him, but to no avail. Instead, he began to empathize with Roger's criticisms. It wasn't long until Jeff too began developing negative attitudes and eventually even resigned from Sunday School.

Bill Stedlund, a friend of Jeff's, took notice that both he and Roger were not as active in the church as they used to be. He observed that when they were in attendance, they usually sat together and would often whisper to each other during the services. He realized that something was wrong.

One evening, Bill saw the two at a local restaurant talking with others from the church. He decided to join them. "How's it going, guys?" Bill said. "Wasn't Sunday's service great! Fifteen souls came to the Lord. And what a sermon! Praise the Lord!"

Everyone at the table just looked at each other. "Sorry, we didn't notice," said Jeff smugly. "I guess we were too preoccupied with the serious problems in the church."

"Problems? What problems?" Bill chirped. "Are you guys goofy or what? The church is going terrific. Lives are being changed every Sunday, the church is growing, and the congregation is ecstatic. What's your problem?"

"Apparently you're blinded to the reality of what's really going on," said Roger. "The church is ruled by politics and unspiritual morons who don't care whose feelings they hurt. Besides, the

people of this church have more faults than an earthquake zone! And furthermore..."

Bill interrupted, "Whoa, wait just a second! I've been wondering what's wrong with you guys, and now I guess I know. You are the ones who are blinded! You have developed a critical, fault-finding spirit and the Devil has blinded you from being able to see the beauty of what the Lord is doing."

"Roger, I heard you got your feelings hurt when the pastor chose someone else over you for Sunday School Superintendent. But instead of talking with him about it and forgiving him, you developed a bitter, unforgiving spirit! Now the Devil has deceived you into looking for fault in everything. And to make matters worse, you've taken your discontent and spread it to other brethren. This is a serious violation of God's Word. You ought to know that the Bible says God hates those who spread discord among the brethren. The word 'hate' is pretty harsh language coming from God, and the Bible warns of calamity that will come upon those who spread discord (*Proverbs 6:14-15*). This means you!"

"Spreading discontent is disobedience to God and will not help solve problems, Roger. Gossip and bad-mouthing only makes a situation worse. Just a few weeks ago, Jeff thought everything was going great until you 'illuminated' him. And How many others have you corrupted with your bad attitude?"

Bill continued, "How did Jesus teach that we should resolve our differences with our brethren? You are to go to the persons who have offended you and talk to them privately and resolve your dispute (*Matthew 18:15*). Did you keep the matter private and go to the pastor? Did you go to others who offended you? No, you didn't. You selfishly chose to spread your complaints and opinions to others to gather their attention and sympathy to your own hurt feelings."

"Roger and Jeff, where in the Bible does Jesus tell His followers to judge, criticize, or condemn our brethren? You can't tell me, because it doesn't

say it! However, Jesus did tell you to love and forgive your brethren, to submit, to prefer, to encourage, to dwell together in love and peace, not to bad-mouth one another, and on and on!" (*John 13:34, Ephesians 4:29-32, 5:21, Romans 12:10, Hebrews 10:25, Ephesians 4:1-3, Titus 3:2*).

Roger and Jeff were offended by Bill's lecture and thereafter avoided his fellowship. But months later Roger became convicted about his sinful attitude and realized that this was why the Lord had not been answering his prayers. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear" (*Psa. 66:18*). He repented of his sin and asked the Lord to forgive him. A few days later he went to the pastor and the other Christians that he had bad-mouthed, and asked forgiveness. Roger recovered from his troubles and continues to serve the Lord to this day.

Sadly, the person whom Roger had influenced most, Jeff, became more critical and bitter. The discord had taken root and had severely damaged Jeff's faith. Unfortunately, discord is like a bad apple that will spoil the whole barrel — an infection that the Devil uses to spread his evil disease.

Jeff continued to spread the seeds of discord. Dozens left the church and the discontent spread, severely damaging the ministry. Souls ceased coming to the altars for salvation, and the loss of tithers caused the church to struggle for several years. Jeff also had many heartaches and no longer serves God.

Christians must never forget that their words can promote life or death, unity or division, love or hate. Although Roger was forgiven for his evil words sown, yet his mouth was an instrument of murder to his friend, Jeff, and others. Satan used his mouth to nearly destroy a whole church. How many souls have been murdered with the mouths of discontent believers? "The hypocrite with his mouth destroys his neighbor..." (*Prov. 11:9*). The Bible clearly warns us to mark those who cause division and strife and to avoid them. They are used by the Devil to cause trouble to the church and to the work of the Gospel (*Romans 16:17*).

Are you a sower of discord? Are you being used by the Devil to cause division and strife in your church? If so, be warned of the severe consequences that you will face unless you repent of your sin and bring your mouth under control. God promises, the sower of discord will face calamity. "A worthless person, a wicked man, walks with a perverse mouth; he winks with his eyes, he shuffles his feet, he points with his fingers; perversity is in his heart, he devises evil continually, he sows discord. Therefore his calamity shall come suddenly; suddenly he shall be broken without remedy" (*Prov. 6:12-15*).

If you can't say good things about your church, then keep your mouth shut. If you don't think the church or its leaders are doing what they should, go talk with them privately. Pray daily for God to help them. And if you still don't think the church is doing you any good, then get down to the altar and pray until it does... or get out of there and find one that will!

Whatever you do, don't become an adversary to the church, it's leaders or people. Regardless of what you think about your church, it belongs to the Lord, and if it is in error He's big enough to correct it without your complaints. If you become a trouble-maker to your church, you will make yourself an enemy to Jesus (*Matthew 25:40*), and He warned against becoming a stumbling-block to the faith of believers lest you face severe judgment. "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (*Matt. 18:6*).

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