

WHAT IF . . . ?

What If a Person Is an Unrepentant Troublemaker?

Romans 16:17; Titus 1:4–7; 3:3–11



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Just as a family works best when there is harmony and cooperation, so does a congregation. No parent enjoys dealing with children who misbehave, but ignoring them or giving in to them are not good options. The same is true in the family of God. Throughout the history of the church, there have been those who stirred up trouble and caused dissension. Such troublemakers will always exist. To keep the unity that is so vital in a healthy church, those who habitually and persistently sow discord must be confronted, dealt with, and encouraged to repent. Unfortunately, there are always a few who refuse to repent even when confronted; these call for stronger measures. Admittedly, these situations represent one of the more difficult and unpleasant aspects of ministry and the Christian life.



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. Two Realistic Facts

While we understand that the church is always going to have people in it who frustrate us and try our patience, clarifying how things *really* are in the church can be helpful. Two facts are undeniable.

- First, *those who lead are very big targets.*
- Second, *those who follow are sometimes very stubborn.*



Quotable

Trust your Bible.

*If you don't
know the answer
to your problem,
keep reading.
God will guide
in His time.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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2. A Quick Review of Chronic Troublemakers

As long as there has been sin, there have been rebels. As long as there has been leadership, there have been those who have fought against leadership. Achan disobeyed God and refused to follow the Lord's appointed leader, Joshua (Joshua 7). David had numerous troubles with his sons Absalom and Amnon. In the New Testament, Jesus dealt with frustrating Pharisees and smug Sadducees, while Paul and other apostles constantly had to warn churches against false teachers. Indeed, troublemakers were everywhere.

3. A Firm Warning (Romans 16:17–18)

As Paul concluded his majestic letter to the Roman church, he wanted to make sure that the people would remain on stable ground as a community. This meant watching out for those who would seek to create fissures in their church community by teaching something contrary to the apostles' doctrine. We have to observe the divisive behavior before we can do anything about it. What did Paul suggest we do? "Stay away from them" (Romans 16:17). In other words, when people begin to influence our churches and teach in ways that are contrary to the good news about Jesus and the teaching we have received from the apostles, we need to protect our communities from those false teachers by keeping our distance.



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4. A Specific Example (Titus 3:8–11)

Titus had been tasked with finding elders for fledgling groups of believers on Crete so they might remain in line with the teaching they had received from Paul. Paul's advice didn't end at telling Titus what to hold on to. He also offered him some advice about what to let go of. Specifically, Paul told Titus to avoid foolish discussions, quarrels, and fights (Titus 3:9). Paul understood that for the churches to survive, they had to remain unified.



LET'S LIVE IT

When it comes to dealing with troublemakers in the church and remaining unified, we need to remember one thing only: *we are each the secret to having a healthy, wholesome, and happy church.*

How have you dealt with church troublemakers in the past?



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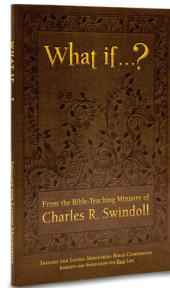
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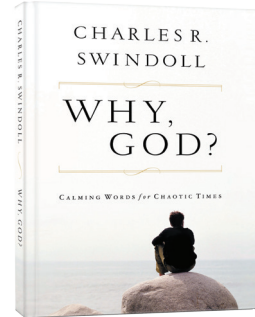
Tools for Digging Deeper



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