

An Exercise To Discern Both Good and Evil (Hebrews 5:14)

Let's Debate It

Scenario:

The congregation has gone many years without an eldership. Everyone agrees that the congregation is severely lacking without elders. There does not appear to be any short term solution. Some members see the congregation lacking spiritual growth because no one really has the authority to implement changes, such as more frequent assemblies. So, during a congregational class setting, a brother in the congregation throws out an idea to appoint a congregational board of directors that all will agree to submit to in matters of expediency. Immediately, the idea is refuted and shut down as unscriptural.

Statement That Arises From Our Scenario:

The person who brought up the idea of a congregational board of directors likes to argue. He generally will argue about anything. He says: "I want to have a debate next Sunday over whether or not a board of directors is wrong."

A Later Statement Is Made:

After a brief discussion, another brother in the congregation says: "Such a debate is unscriptural. It is wrong. We can't allow that. This matter, like other matters, can easily be resolved by you simply showing the Scriptural authority right now for your idea. He then reads Ephesians 5:10, Philippians 3:16, and I Thessalonians 5:21."

For Discussion: What do you see in those statements?

- The Scriptures show us the importance of having elders in every congregation (**Acts 14:23**).
- Those elders must be Scripturally qualified (**I Timothy 3:1-7** and **Titus 1:5-9**) that have "rule" (**I Timothy 5:17** and **Hebrews 13:7**). For more on the qualifications of elders, see: <https://www.wordsoftruth.net/qualifiedelders.html>
- Elders are men that watch for your soul (**Hebrews 13:17**). They oversee and feed the flock (**Acts 20:17; 20:28**).
- A congregation without qualified elders is left with each member submitting to one another (**Ephesians 5:21**). This is not a balanced leadership. That often means the weakest members of the congregation are the ones being catered to as that is the Lord's will (**I Corinthians 12:14-27**). Again though, with that system being unchecked, balance is normally not achieved.
- There is no substitution for an eldership. "Men's Business Meetings" are an unscriptural process. Preachers have no authority to rule in a congregation like elders are supposed to. The denominational "Pastor" system is often implemented in churches as people unscripturally elevate preachers. See: <https://www.wordsoftruth.net/wotvol12/wotbulletin10232011.html> and <https://www.wordsoftruth.net/BulletinApril222018.pdf>

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- The Lord's church assembles, at minimum, every first day of the week (**Acts 20:7** and **I Corinthians 16:1-2**). Each member is expected by God to be there (**Hebrews 10:23-25**).
- Throughout the New Testament, we find that things were better when there was daily interaction among the saints. There are various contexts that make this point (**Acts 2:46** and **Hebrews 3:12-13**). The more brethren are together for spiritual reasons the more we could benefit each other (**Ephesians 4:15-16**). Yet, as we look at the Scriptures, the authority to implement binding assemblies of the church does not rest with preachers.
- There is nothing in the Scriptures that mentions a "board of directors" for any reason in the body of Christ. The "latter statement" of this scenario is spot on. Christians are supposed to prove what is acceptable unto our Lord (**Ephesians 5:10**). The church belongs to Christ (**Matthew 16:18**). He is the sole head of the church (**Colossians 1:12-18**). The church is His house (**Hebrews 3:1-6**). He never permitted a board of directors to oversee His people. The Scriptures contain all the information we need to do every good work (**II Timothy 3:15-17**). The Scriptures contain all the information we need pertaining to life and godliness (**II Peter 1:3-4**). We are supposed to live by every Scripture recorded (**Luke 4:4**). Prior to Jesus ascending into Heaven, He told the eleven Apostles alive at that time this: *"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen"* (**Matthew 28:18-20**). To this very day, we are expected by the Lord to speak and do only those things which He has authorized us to say and do (**Colossians 3:16-17**, **I Thessalonians 4:1-2**, **I Thessalonians 5:21**, **James 1:19-25**, **James 2:10-12**, and **I Peter 4:11**).
- Going beyond what the Lord has authorized has always been wrong (**Deuteronomy 4:2** and **Proverbs 30:5-6**) and will always be wrong (**Galatians 1:6-9** and **Revelation 22:18-19**). Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, decided to burn incense before the Lord that God had not commanded them to do. The Lord consumed them in a fire for doing so (**Leviticus 10:1-2**). David and Nathan the prophet decided it would be good to build God a house of cedar. The Lord pointed out to them that He never asked them to do so and that their plans were contrary to His plans (**II Samuel 7:1-17**). The Jews had certain traditions that they formed and commanded others to follow them. Jesus rebuked them because they chose their traditions over following the will of the Lord (**Mark 7:1-9**). Certain Jews thought it was a good idea to create business ventures in the temple of the Lord. Jesus made a whip and drove them out from the temple (**John 2:13-17**). Can you see, from God's word, that when He hasn't authorized something He is displeased when people do those things?

Regarding the Statement That Arises From Our Scenario:

- The idea of a person who likes to argue can mean various things. The word argue has several definitions. For one, "1. Give reasons or cite evidence in support of an

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idea, action, or theory, typically with the aim of persuading others to share one's view. 2. Exchange or express diverging or opposite views, typically in a heated or angry way” (New Oxford American Dictionary).

- This CAN be dangerous. Strife can occur with such thinking. Strife and what can come about from strife is a problem (**Proverbs 16:28, Proverbs 17:14, Proverbs 20:3, Proverbs 22:10, Proverbs 26:21, I Corinthians 3:1-3, Philippians 2:3, and James 3:13-18**).

Regarding the Later Statement That Is Made From Our Scenario:

- Regarding debating among brethren...The word debate, in the English language, means this: “a formal discussion on a particular topic in a public meeting or legislative assembly, in which opposing arguments are put forward” (New Oxford American Dictionary). Synonyms include: “...parley, argument, counterargument, dispute, wrangle, war of words, argumentation, disputation, dissension, disagreement, contention, conflict...” (Oxford American Writer’s Thesaurus). What stands out to you in all of that?
- Notice: *“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them... Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying. For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults”* (**Romans 1:28-32 and II Corinthians 12:19-20**).
- Study the word “debate” in **Romans 1:29** and “debates” in **II Corinthians 12:20**. In **Romans 1:29** and **II Corinthians 12:20** it is the same Greek word. The word translated “debate(s)” means: “of uncertain affinity; a quarrel, i.e. (by implication) wrangling: — contention, debate, strife, variance” (Strong’s # 2054). Now, consider how that word is used in other Scriptures. It is translated “strife” in **Romans 13:13, I Corinthians 3:3, Philippians 1:15, and I Timothy 6:4**. Then we find that Greek word translated as “contentions” in **I Corinthians 1:11**, “variance” in **Galatians 5:20**, and “contentions” in **Titus 3:9**. Look at those Scriptures and read the contexts. Those Scriptures, in their contexts, show us that “debate” is sinful. It is carnal and is to be avoided. As you think about it, other Scriptures make this even clearer.
- When false brethren came in among the saints they did not let them speak and then answer them to give brethren a choice (**Galatians 2:1-5**).
- There were and always will be false brethren (**Matthew 7:15-20, Matthew 26:14-16, John 12:1-6, Acts 20:28-31, Galatians 5:7-9, I Timothy 1:19-20, II**

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Timothy 2:14-18, II Timothy 4:10-17, and II Peter 2:1-3). False brethren are sneaky (**Ephesians 4:14** and **II Timothy 3:1-7**). The Lord does NOT permit His people to listen to any and all argumentation. The Lord does not permit us to listen to opposing arguments (**Proverbs 14:7, Proverbs 19:27, Matthew 16:5-12, Mark 4:24, Colossians 2:4-8, II John 1:9-11, and Revelation 2:14-16**). The fact is, those that present things contrary to the truth are to be marked and avoided so that they do not deceive the simple (**Romans 16:17-18**). Think on that. How could the people of God claim to be faithful if we permitted that which God explicitly commands us to avoid?

- There is a difference in contending for the faith because error creeps in among the saints (**Jude 1:3-4**) and being a person of strife, debate, and contention. Contending for the faith is of necessity at times (**Philippians 1:17** and **Galatians 2:11-17**). Strife and contentiousness are works of the flesh (**Galatians 5:19-21**). Such a person is to be rejected if proper admonishment is refused (Titus 3:9-11).
- So, this later statement is on point. The words of false brethren need to be put to a stop (**I Timothy 1:3-7, II Timothy 2:14-18, and Titus 1:10-14**).
- If a board of directors in the body of Christ is acceptable to our Lord, it would be easy to prove. Since nothing is said of such in the Scriptures, there should be no discussion (**Isaiah 8:20**).