

## Handling Differences of Opinion Biblically

Honoring Differences of Opinion  
Between Leaders & Those They Lead

Differences are inevitable !

- ♦ Codes and followers will differ with each other
- ♦ We will differ with our peers
- ♦ I will differ with myself (over time)
- ♦ Over what do we differ?

<u>preferences</u>	<u>method</u>	<u>Goal</u>
<u>values</u>	<u>doctrine</u>	<u>Plans</u>
<u>conviction</u>	<u>morality</u>	<u>Decision</u>
	<u>personal attitudes</u>	

- ♦ Why do we differ?

<u>perception</u>	<u>viewpoint</u>	<u>concerns</u>
<u>judgments</u>	<u>level of comfort</u>	<u>timing</u>
<u>understanding</u>	<u>opinions</u>	<u>priorities</u>

Responding to our God given diversity

- ♦ Unity ≠ Unanimity ≠ Uniformity
- ♦ Leadership is accountable...
  - For the organization's cultural response to the diversity God has brought to us
  - To teach biblical principles
  - To model biblical principles
  - To establish processes, procedure & practices
  - To align the culture to biblical principles

## Three Biblical Tools for Leaders...

(Warning: Humility Required 1 Peter 5:3)

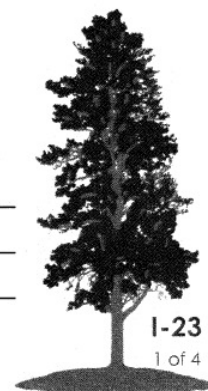
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## Open-Door Discussions (James 1:19; Proverbs 27:9)

Characteristic of an always listening leader

- ♦ Very informal (the door always is open); spur-of-the-moment
  - ♦ Active listening required
  - ♦ Always ready to adjust course in light of new information
  - ♦ Initially positive, but quick to engage
  - ♦ Lean towards us whenever possible
  - ♦ Requires a culture of friendly dialogue and safety
  - ♦ Biblical examples
    - Jonathan's plan to warn David about Saul (1 Sam 20)
    - Jethro giving counsel to Moses re: organization (Ex 18)
    - Daniel eating the King's meat (Dan 1:8-16)
    - David hears & rejects counsel to kill Saul (1 Sam 24,26)
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## Seeking Out Information & Counsel (Luke 14:31; Prov 15:22;...)

Characteristic of an always asking leader

- ♦ Still informal, but less so
  - ♦ Active listening; but also asking probing questions
    - You get answers to the questions you ask
    - Every question has a cost associated to it
  - ♦ Seek to gain new insight; shedding light on blind spots
  - ♦ Thoughtfully adjust counsel in light of new insights
  - ♦ Requires a culture of consultative leadership
  - ♦ Not a sign of weakness, but humility
  - ♦ Biblical examples
    - Pharaoh seeking counsel from Joseph (Gen 41:1-36)
    - Nebuchadnezzar seeking counsel from Daniel (Dan 4)
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## A Formal Biblical Appeal (1 Cor 4:1; 2 Tim 2:24a)

Characteristic of an always serving leader

- ♦ A formal meeting to hear and respond to a concern
- ♦ When Making an Appeal
  - Be discerning
  - Be prayerful
  - Be respectful
  - Be thankful
  - Be trustful
- ♦ When Responding to an Appeal
  - Be on active listening
  - Be open
  - Be teachably
  - Be willing to consider
  - Be respectful
- ♦ Requires a culture of mutual humility and submission
- ♦ Biblical examples
  - Abigail appeals to David to spare Nabal (1 Sam 25)
  - Nehemiah before King Artaxerxes (Neh 1)
  - Esther's appeal to the King (Esther 4-7)
  - Barnabas bringing Paul before the apostles (Acts 9:26-31)
  - The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-35)

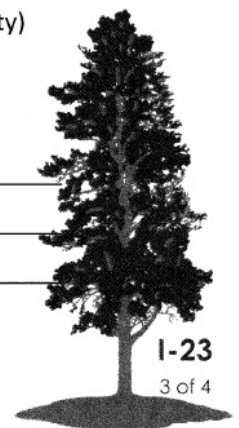
## How Do We Operate Today?

### From the Flock

- ♦ Frequent and open discontent, discontents and disagreements
- ♦ Behind the scenes gossip and backbiting
- ♦ Today's culture: we don't appeal; we protest!

### From the Leadership

- ♦ "I'm the leader; I make the decision" (pride vs. humility)
- ♦ Unity = Unanimity: leaders often force conformity
- ♦ Blind to communication disconnects
- ♦ Unaware of tendencies to not listen and be unresponsive



## Assessing my Leadership

1. What is our organizational culture vis-à-vis making decisions and involving others in that process?

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2. How well do I listen? How approachable am I?

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3. How often do I genuinely listen to the views of those I lead when they are contrary to my own perspective?

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4. How often am I persuaded to change my mind after listening to an appeal (formal or informal)? If this rarely happens, are there any recurring thought patterns that keep me from responding positively to an appeal? Is pride a hindrance in my leadership?

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5. How often do I ask penetrating questions to discover the hearts of those I lead?

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