

## HOW DO I DEAL WITH AN OBSTINATE BOARD MEMBER?

Sometimes don't you just wonder why the Lord made some people so obstinate? I mean, really...particularly folks in the church. Do you ever find yourself asking, "Does this person love God or not?"

This problem becomes particularly acute when the obstinate person serves as a member of your governing board of deacons or elders.

Let me suggest that unless you are new to the church and have inherited some of these folks, you should have been doing your homework before you let a person like this get into leadership. But I suppose if this article really has your attention at this point you may have let something get out of hand. So now what to do about it...

Unfortunately, none of us work for perfect churches. We lead them yet they are still not perfect. Surprise, surprise. In this case, let me suggest a few things you can do in dealing with an obstinate board member.

Pray. Don't think of this as an afterthought. Prayer must be a forethought if you plan to successfully navigate this relational challenge.

Confront the issue. I know this is something we all love to do. We'd rather punt than do this. I assure you the problem is not going away. Confronting involves the following:

Have all your facts in order.

Arrange to talk privately with your board member. Follow the Matthew 18 principle. There is a reason it is in the Book.

If you are unable to come to resolution just with the two of you, then bring a fellow board member with you.

If that doesn't work, take the issue to the leadership board on which the person serves. You may have to be selective here if the person serves on something other than the top governing board of the church.

Frankly, if this person serves on some lesser board or committee, maybe you should not get so worked up over the conflict. Unless your church is different than the ones I've served, you are always going to have obstinate people. Pick your battles wisely.

Unless it's a moral or ethical issue, you probably are going to stop there. As you exercise wisdom, if you have the ability or boardsmanship capital to remove this person from the board, you may want to do just that. The operative words in this case are "exercise wisdom."

In most cases, however, wisdom expressed by leadership would say do not blow it out of proportion. Yes, it is annoying, but as a leader you need to be able to effectively deal with annoyances. You may have to live with it.

In the future, do your homework. There really is no reason to get in that spot. The longer you serve at the church, the more you need to exercise influence on board selection. After all, you are the CEO, responsible for moving the mission of the church forward and for the development of leaders. Do not let the obstinate folks of this world detract you. David had his in 2 Samuel 16. You are a leader, and you are going to have yours, too.

Take the high road. Do everything you can to prevent that type of person from moving into leadership. When they do, however, deal with their actions forthrightly. You can hope it will go away on its own. It will not. So exercise your leadership and act. You will either gain a trusted friend or you will move the problem out of leadership. Maybe you'll do both. The church wins in any case.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Dick Hardy is the Founder and President of ***The Hardy Group***, an Executive Consulting firm for senior pastors of churches. Dick brings a wealth of experience to the table for pastors when dealing with the tough issues of the church relative to growth, organization, leadership, administration, and change. His service as Administrative Pastor to two mega churches and as Vice President at a flagship denominational Bible college makes him a resource your church will want to retain.

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