

THE GROUND RULES FOR DISCUSSION

“One who isolates himself pursues selfish desires; he rebels against all sound judgment. A fool does not delight in understanding, but only wants to show off his opinions... The one who gives an answer before he listens— this is foolishness and disgrace for him.” Proverbs 18:1-2, 13

No one wants to be wrong. But sometimes we want something so badly, we don't care if we are wrong. We simply want what we want! Does this apply to churches who are considering relocating? It sure does. Sometimes there are people who have gotten it in their heads that their church needs to relocate and are emotionally involved with the idea. They just can't see it any other way. Sometimes, members are angry that relocation is being discussed at all—and they have the attitude, “Don't confuse me with the facts; my mind is made up.” Either way, here are some warning signals you may be the one on the wrong track:

- If the best you can do to make your case is calling “the other side” names and assigning evil motives to them, you are acting out of the wrong spirit.
- If you cannot cite any evidence to support your position, but feel those with a different point of view are crazy, you are the one in the wrong state of mind.
- If you refuse to read any of the information provided by the committee (perhaps saying, “I don't need to read that; I already know what we need to do”), you have the wrong attitude.
- If, as your church considers relocation, you don't participate in the prayer emphasis, but you are ready to vote right now, you have the wrong motives.

On the other hand, if you want to decide this important matter in a Christ-like manner, here are the ground rules for discussion:

1. Everyone is expected to do their homework. Each member should read all the information provided to the congregation. Feel free to do your own research.
2. Everyone is expected to have the courage of their convictions and address the issues in the appropriate forums. Secret strategy sessions and voter turnout efforts are out of bounds.
3. Everyone is expected to provide evidence or a rationale for their positions. Simply saying, “I disagree” or “I just feel we ought to...” is not good enough.
4. Everyone is obligated to deal with the facts, and to not attack persons or their motives.
5. No one will be expected to prove their case beyond any doubt. That would be unreasonable. Remember, we walk by faith, not by sight.
6. A congregation makes decisions together as the Holy Spirit leads them. The leading of the Holy Spirit should not be confused with strong feelings. Thus, each member is responsible to pray with an openness to the will of God, conscious that their initial impression may have been wrong.

Today's Scripture Reading: Proverbs 18

Today's Prayer Guidance: *Lord, I sometimes have a lot of confidence in my opinions. Deliver me from the arrogance of assuming I am right or jumping to the conclusion that my brothers and sisters are wrong. Help me be “quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger” (James 1:19).*