



Civil Disobedience Part Two: It's Starting to Become Necessary

~ Ricki Lee Brooks

Civil Disobedience: Part Two

It's Starting to Become Necessary

Ricki Lee Brooks

In our last post, "Civil Disobedience: When Does It Become Necessary," we made a clear biblical point...while civil disobedience must always be an option for a Christian, a local church, or the Church, it must be engaged only under certain conditions.

We also forecasted the very real possibility that the tipping point might very well be reached in the future. However, we had not yet crossed the threshold. After a lengthy study of the pertinent passages in Scripture, we wrote the following regarding when it is appropriate to not follow the dictates of a ruling body:

"There is a simple pattern here.

Folks were told to violate God's truths.

Folks were told to murder.

Folks were told to worship someone or something other than God.

Folks were told to not speak or teach on behalf of the Lord.

This then might be called the Romans 13 Caveat: 'When told to violate the word of god, to commit evil, to worship another, or to shut up about God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit we must refuse.'

Some believe the 'stay at home, wearing of masks, social distance guidelines, and the remain closed' orders are an overreach of government when it comes to churches. We do not...not yet. Yes, civil disobedience is always an option. In fact, it is likely we will, one and all, find ourselves choosing this option should current events continue to devolve."

A few sentences later, we wrote:

"Specifically, we do not believe community standards, in response to the viral pandemic, regulating where we worship reaches the threshold of what we find in the biblical instances of civil disobedience. Yes, we are being told to alter the where and how of what we do, but we've not been told to violate God's truths, commit or support acts of evil, worship someone or something other than God, or not speak or teach on behalf of the Lord. Not yet. Not yet."

One of those "Not yet" issues has arrived. We have now been instructed that we cannot sing during our worship services. This is a problem...because it violates clear instruction in the Word of God. How so? Well, let's take a look.

Under the Governor's New Order (see it here), guideline #12 states:

" Religious Services are limited to 25 percent of indoor occupancy limits, or no more than 200 people, whichever is fewer. Congregation members/attendees must wear facial coverings at all times and **congregation singing is prohibited**. No choir, band, or ensemble shall perform during the service. Vocal or instrumental soloists are permitted to perform, and vocal soloists may have a single accompanist. Outdoor services must follow the Outdoor Dining Guidance, found here, applicable to the structure or facility." (bold, italics, and underline added)

*Let the word of Christ
dwell in you richly with
all wisdom, teaching and
admonishing one another
with psalms and hymns
and spiritual songs,
singing with thankfulness
in your hearts to God.*

This instruction forces us to consider the very nature of Christian singing. In the broad context of the Bible, singing often erupts spontaneously in response to God and his truth (Exodus 15; Psalm 96: Psalm 104:33; Isaiah 42:10-17; Matthew 36:30; Acts 16:25-34; Romans 15:9; Hebrews 2:12; Revelation 15). It's not only a natural response of the heart filled with worship, it's a response expected by our Lord. In fact, in Ephesians 5:15-21 and Colossians 3:12-17, we are given specific instruction about this. While not exactly the same, the passages are similar enough that we can zero in on just one of them. So, let's take a brief look at Colossians 3:15-21 and then concentrate on verse 16:

And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly with all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

In Colossians 3:16 (underlined), the main clause includes the verb "dwell" ("let the word of Christ dwell in you richly with all wisdom"). "Dwell" is present imperative...i.e. it's not a suggestion, it's a directive, a command that is to be done persistently.

This main clause is followed by two participial phrases...

"...teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (teaching and admonishing)

"...singing with thanksgiving in your hearts to God" (singing)

Participial phrases are subordinate clauses that modify or complement the main clause. In other words, in the above directive from God, when we're interacting with one another, via the word of Christ richly dwelling within us, how are we to express it? Answer: we express it with songs.

The natural and expected response to the word of Christ is the song of worship. Singing both teaches and admonishes...it reinforces the word of Christ and it warns in light of the word of Christ. It also gives thanks to God.

Given that the instruction in this context is a clear and present directive and given that we see this kind of "singing" in the wider context of Scripture, we believe we've reached one of those tipping points we mentioned in our previous discussion regarding civil disobedience. The question before us then is this: Does the "congregation singing is prohibited" rule cause us to disobey the Lord? The answer is obviously "yes." So, does this conclude the matter? Do we sing anyway? The answers, again are "yes."

In conclusion, just as we have stated on many occasions, we are not law enforcement. The role of a church and its participants is persuasion and faithfulness (evangelism and discipleship), not compulsion. We recognize that both individual believers as well as individual churches may not see eye to eye on every point of Scriptural truth. Quoting from our first essay on matters regarding civil disobedience, "Sometimes, within the Lord's Church, faithful followers disagree. In fact, there are times when folks in the Body of Christ, who genuinely enjoy solid, wonderful fellowship disagree. On matters of prime importance—the essentials* of our faith—these folks stand with complete agenda harmony. However, on some things, not of prime importance, they choose to disagree with understanding, love, and compassion. This does not hurt their fellowship. In fact, if they are careful, their fellowship grows, their depth expands, their resolve tempers, and their commitment strengthens." Therefore, while we will continue following previous safety protocols, we also intend to keep singing during our services and we leave it to you to choose what is best for you and your households.

*Essentials: the core of Christian belief, the necessary truths of and for salvation. Examples: the Trinity, the deity and humanity of Jesus Christ, the personhood of the Holy Spirit, Salvation by faith through grace alone, the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible...

The About Page

About Sound Communication

Sound Communication is a division of West Sound Community Church. It exists to help extend our ministry beyond our geographical location. At Sound Communication, we simply want to assist you with the skills you need to meet your unique challenges. We also want to give you a three-fold promise. First, should we accept the mission of assisting you, we will give you the absolute best of all we are and all we have to offer. Second, we will not offer what we cannot reasonably accomplish. Therefore, you can always count on us for an honest assessment of both your dilemma and our "fit" on behalf of your dilemma. Third, anything you can purchase from Sound Communication in hard-copy you can also download for free.

About Ricki Lee Brooks

Jesus said fields all across the world are ready for the harvest. He wants as many as possible to hear his life-changing message...and, at Sound Communication, we can think of no greater privilege than being a part of a team that delivers that message. Believers since the first century have dedicated themselves to this task. The times in which we live are no different. Faithful messengers still proclaim God's great message of salvation through Jesus Christ. Ricki Lee Brooks is just one among many of those messengers.

Ricki is the father of three and grandfather of four. All three of his children are happily married.

His heart is to help others overcome adversity by learning to truly walk in the presence of the Savior. Many years of ministry have allowed this in the lives of both adults and the next generations. Throughout the years, the addition of speaking on behalf of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), Community Abstinence and Relationship Education (CARE), camps, retreats, and ECOLA Bible School has been both a ministry blessing and benefit.

Over 40 years ago, he and his wife, Vanita, wrote down their mission statement for life. Here it is...

Our mission in life is to love our Lord, one another, and our children more and more every day and to help as many as possible to do the same thing.

Since then much has changed. His children walk with the Lord as they grow their own families. Many have heard the life-changing news of Jesus Christ and are falling more in love with the Savior. And, sadly, yet triumphantly, Vanita is now with the Lord. One might think the death of Ricki's beloved would change the mission statement. It has not. After losing Vanita at the hands of a drunk driver, Ricki has often said, "Without her, I feel less effective, but not less impassioned. Helping people love the Lord is the greatest privilege on earth."

Whether talking with an individual on a park bench, leading a small seminar, or speaking to a large audience...whether the topic is specific to an organization or general and universal to the human condition...Ricki knows people wrestle with similar issues—who am I, why am I here, is there more to life? Failing to answer these questions inevitably leads to SID (spiritual identity disorder). It pushes individuals into drift mode and organizations into corporate anomie. Facing this kind of adversity can be either a positive challenge or a negative pitfall for both individuals and organizations. Ricki's role is to help you toward the positive.

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