

10 Reasons Why Pastors Lose Friendships

I write this post not to create heartache for pastors, but for just the opposite reason: to help pastors and laity work harder at growing and preserving friendships that facilitate faithfulness and ministry.

If we understand better why friendships falter, perhaps we can avoid the faltering.

1. **Some pastors have had professors, mentors and other pastors encourage them *not* to develop such friendships in the first place.** “You’ll just get hurt if you get too close to church members,” they’ve heard. Frankly, I think that’s a sad—and unnecessary—approach to take.
2. **Some laypersons set unattainable expectations for their pastors.** If the pastor can’t possibly live up to what the laity expects, he’ll always let them down—and friendships diminish in the fallout.
3. **Some leaders quickly lose trust in one another because of bad experiences in the past.** It usually takes only one bad relationship between a pastor and a lay leader for both of them to be skeptical about any future relationships. That skepticism leads to a weak commitment to friendships.
4. **Pastors often move a lot.** I trust that those moves are always under God’s direction, but even if so, frequent ministry moves hardly facilitate long-term friendships. Absence does not necessarily make the heart grow fonder when moves are the norm.
5. **Some church members mistreat a pastor’s family.** Sometimes, they expect more out of the pastor’s family than they expect out of their own. In other cases, they openly criticize the pastor within hearing distance of the pastor’s family. From a pastor’s perspective, it’s

tough to remain friends with people who hurt our loved ones.

6. **Some pastors don't know how to be a friend.** They know how to speak into someone's life from a pulpit, but they're not so good at just spending time with brothers and sisters in Christ. What starts out as a friendship quickly settles into only a pastor-to-parishioner responsibility.
7. **It's tough (and risky) to be vulnerable as a pastor.** And, when you do choose to be vulnerable, it's often harder to view yourself as the spiritual leader anymore. Embarrassment and regret get in the way of friendship.
8. **Pastors must at times lead the way with church discipline.** Nobody wants to tackle this painful task, but it's sometimes necessary. The goal must be to bring the fallen believer to repentance and restoration, but that seldom happens without some immediate strain on friendships.
9. **Many pastors get so busy—in an unhealthy way—that they sacrifice time for friendships.** That's one of the reasons the friendly pastor of a smaller church seems to be less friendly as the church grows. In too many cases, that perception is accurate.
10. **Sin disrupts friendships.** Sinning laypersons pull away from pastors, and pastors living in sin pull away from the laity they're called to lead. Dangerous isolation is the result in both cases.

Pastors and laity, I challenge all of us to learn to be godly, intentional friends who provoke one another to good works (Heb. 10:24). The risks may be real, but the benefits trump them.

If you want ideas for developing friendships, take a look at Brian Autry's post, "10 Suggestions for Making Friends as a Pastor." {[eo](#)}

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