

10 Ways the Enemy Gets the Upper Hand in a Church

Let me start this post with a clear caveat: Satan will not ultimately win as he attacks God's church.

Jesus broke the powers through His cross (Col. 2:15), and the enemy will eventually be cast into outer darkness (Rev. 20:10). In the meantime, though, the devil strategically attacks us.

Consider the following ways he seeks to get the "up"per hand.

1. He wants us to mess up in sin. The consequences of our sin are numerous. Our witness loses credibility. Our prayers are hindered. Our joy wanes. Relationships often suffer. The world looks at us and sees no difference—and the enemy temporarily wins.

2. He wants us to cover up our sin. He did it in the Garden of Eden, and he still does it today: If we sin, he wants us to hide like Adam and Eve did. That way, we never confess it and turn from it. Likewise, the enemy wants the local church to ignore the sin among its members.

3. He wants us to get hung up on difficulties and discouragement. "You've served God faithfully," he says to us, "but what good has it done? You're still struggling and lonely." He delights when we cower in the cave like Elijah (1 Kin. 19), forgetting God's previous blessings and focusing on only the trouble at hand.

4. He wants us to clam up in evangelism. God has only one plan to get the gospel to our neighbors and the nations: believers telling the story to others (Rom. 10:9-16). It's the enemy who points out reasons for us *not* to share the gospel. Maybe you've heard messages like "You're going to lose your

friendship” or “You really don’t know enough to do evangelism.”

5. He wants us to bow up over position and power. The enemy who himself sought the throne of God is pleased when we guard our turf and protect our positions in the local church. “You’ve served in that position for years,” he reminds us, “and why should you give it up? Nobody can do it as well as you can.”

6. He wants us to break up. This strategy, too, started in the garden, where Adam turned on Eve and blamed her for his wrong. From the beginning, the enemy has sought to sever marriages, families, friendships and congregations. He knows the church will hardly make a difference when we shoot each other in the back.

7. He wants us to build up our own kingdoms. He does not mind when we talk about the kingdom of God, as long as our real focus is our own kingdom. “Serve God,” he says, “but make sure others know just how much you’re serving Him. In a ‘humble’ way, be sure to get the word out about the size and influence of your ministry.”

8. He wants us to cloud up the message. Without question, the enemy rejoices when the gospel message is decidedly and clearly forsaken. At the same time, though, he is pleased when the message is subtly changed so the gospel disappears while still sounding like a biblical message. The cloudiness of the message thus keeps non-believers from hearing the truth.

9. He wants us to give up on prayer. He points out unanswered prayers, reminding us that God has at times not heard us in the past. Why would we then seek God’s presence and power today?

10. He wants us to get puffed up with ego. In fact, this strategy is the root of the rest of these strategies. When we reside on the throne of our lives, the enemy is at least

temporarily winning.

What other ways have you seen the enemy get the “upper” hand in a church?

NOTE: The church I attend, Restoration Church in Wake Forest, North Carolina, is seeking 1,000 prayer partners to pray for us once a month during 2015. Would you join us in praying? Please sign up at .

Chuck Lawless currently serves as Professor of Evangelism and Missions and Dean of Graduate Studies at Southeastern Seminary. You can connect with Dr. Lawless on both Twitter and Facebook.

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