

21 Signs of a Toxic Church—And Why You Should Leave if You're in One

Are you in proper divine alignment for this new year, for this coming decade and the rest of your life? If not, it is absolutely urgent for you to examine every aspect of your life and get in proper alignment—especially in the area of making sure you are in a healthy church, not a toxic church.

I agonized over releasing this word.

I didn't want to release it; but, as I prayed, I could feel Holy Spirit pushing me strongly to do so. At our live deliverance and equipping conferences, I have seen so many people get delivered and healed from church wounds, spiritual abuse and toxic church experiences that it astounds me. Although hidden, these things are rampant in the body of Christ.

Nevertheless, freedom from church hurt is absolutely essential if people are going to grow in the Lord. As Christians, we simply *have* to be rightly plugged into a local church in order to grow like the Lord wants us to grow.

But how is this possible when people have been so hurt by the church that they can't even darken the door without recalling all the emotional trauma?

Yet church leaders rarely want to talk about church wounds realistically.

People do talk about church wounds sometimes, but very rarely with intent to heal. Some church leaders rebuke their parishioners for having church wounds, or for "getting offended" in the first place; and it's true that getting

offended blocks the anointing. But not every church wound comes from an offense.

Other church leaders seem to do the “ecclesiastically correct” thing and pretend that nobody gets hurt in church. However, this is equally untruthful.

If we’re going to see these things healed in the body of Christ, we have to talk about them openly.

If we are going to be agents of deliverance who help people know the truth—which makes them free—then we have to be speakers of truth and writers of truth. And being a teller of truth is not always easy.

So, before you read these 21 signs of a toxic church, let me first say that:

–I’m speaking the truth today because being under a toxic (read: demonic) church covering is one of the most destructive things that people can experience in their Christian walk.

–God’s people need to be free from church wounds, church hurts, demonic spiritual covering and toxicity of every kind.

–If we, as Christian leaders, are going to demonstrate *real* love for the body of Christ, then we must love people enough to tell you the truth so that you can be free.

When we talk about these things, we’re not taking shots at any particular church. When I wrote this article, I wept before the Lord and cried out to Him in intercession for churches and pastors who are trapped in this web of demonization and demonic activity that I list below. My heart breaks for the body of Christ, and for every local church that is not functioning in God’s highest and best for them. I love the local church.

But the fact remains that some shepherds are wolves in sheep’s clothing and are leading the body astray, controlling them or

otherwise crippling them. And we would be embracing a lie if we in the church did not admit this publicly.

Truth Comes Before Healing and Deliverance

That is why I believe the Lord asked me to release this list. And I believe I share the Lord's heart for you on this matter when I say that one of my highest wishes for you as we start the new year is this:

If you're in a toxic church, get out of it. And find a new church that is healthy and holy.

Why?

Because a toxic church will destroy your life, and you won't even know it's being destroyed. Being in a toxic church places you under an evil covering. This means you are submitting to demons, and you may think *The demons are their demons, so they don't impact me*, but if you think that, you are wrong.

21 Signs of a Toxic Church

So, here are 21 signs of a toxic church or pastor (and the pronoun "he" could be equally applied to "she"):

1. The pastor and leaders do not preach and believe that the Bible is the inerrant, infallible Word of God. (This is the No. 1 sign of a toxic church and is more important than any of the red flags below.)
2. The pastor is in charge, not Holy Spirit.
3. The pastor is "right," instead of the Word being right.
4. The clock, the sermon, the announcements, the schedule and the written worship order get highest preference in the service, regardless of what Holy Spirit is doing or showing that He wants to do.
5. The pastor practices cronyism. In other words, it's how much you suck up to the pastor that gets you friendship, high esteem, opportunity, discipleship, endorsement and

so on—instead of your godly character and the fruit of your life being what matters.

6. Everyone who leaves gets blacklisted.
7. The pastor “interviews” you for information about other people, making you feel special because he shared confidential information with you. (But what you don’t realize is that he’s doing the same thing about you with other people.)
8. People are removed from leadership without being told why or what they did wrong.
9. The pastor uses the pulpit as a whipping post to talk badly to and about people he will not confront in person.
10. The church uses people up and then throws them away or spits them out. (For example, the church involuntarily “retires” elderly staff who are still competent because it wants to be staffed with a younger crowd. Often this leaves the elderly minister without honor or financial provision).
11. Chronic financial problems.
12. Prayer is not emphasized and practiced, both privately and corporately.
13. The pastor accuses you of doing, saying and thinking things that you are not doing, saying or thinking—but that *he* is doing, saying or thinking.
14. The pastor believes there is an age limit on the anointing.
15. The pastor and staff lie.
16. People are preached to, but not disciplined and raised up to do the work of the ministry.
17. The pastor openly opposes and even mocks the work of Holy Spirit.
18. No one is encouraged to build an independent ministry except the pastor and his cronies.
19. Women are not equipped and empowered to operate in leadership.
20. The pastor believes that some of the gifts of the Spirit

(prophecy, miracles and diverse tongues) no longer operate today.

21. Belief that any of the fivefold ministry offices (apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor or teacher) are no longer relevant and necessary in the church today.

I could go on, but you get the picture.

If you and your family are under a covering such as this, it is killing your spiritual life, finances and family, even if you don't know it. Please, please, I beg of you in the name of Jesus: Remove yourself from submission to demons and leave that church.

As soon as you leave, *immediately and verbally* renounce your agreement with the covering you have been under—verbally renounce, reject and break the covering itself—and bind yourself to Jesus. Command every evil thing to leave you in Jesus' name and ask Jesus to fill you with His Spirit where those things were.

Then find a holy and healthy church that both preaches and practices the Word of God, and worships God the Father, God the Son *and* God the Holy Spirit.

You can be healed, whole and free from church wounds, spiritual abuse and toxic church experiences. But the healing process begins with recognizing the truth about your situation, and with getting yourself out from under any church situation that does not line up with God's Word. Then, and only then, can you begin the journey to spiritual and emotional healing and wholeness. {eoa}

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