

7 Signs of a Weak Leader or Pastor

A youth pastor emailed me. He's frustrated his pastor continually caves into pressures of a few leaders in the church. They are not supportive of the youth ministry, even though it's the fastest growing area of the church.

The complaint they have? The ministry is costing far more than it brings into the church. Young people are coming to the church in growing numbers, but without their parents. Young people don't usually contribute to the church, so it's causing an issue with some of the deacons.

The pastor was involved and supportive in the expansion of youth ministries and the church is financially sound, but a few deacons consider it an "unprofitable" ministry.

The pastor's solution? Cut back on the youth ministry expenditures to keep the deacons happy.

I'd love to tell you this is an isolated issue, but I've written about these type situations before. Obviously, I don't have all the facts, but based on what I do know, it sounds like the pastor is a weak leader.

And, I hate labeling a pastor weak on anything. Certainly I've been weak on many things. Preaching. Shepherding. Staff development. And, yes, leading. You name it—I've been weak.

But we have to label the problem before we can hope to find solutions.

Have you ever known a weak leader? They're usually easy to spot.

Here are seven signs of a weak leader:

1. Runs from conflict. They avoid it at any cost. They usually say what you want to hear. They are passive-aggressive. They cave to the loudest voices. They disappear when trouble develops. You'll never see them in the crowd when there's a controversy looming. They hide better than they engage when people are upset about something or things aren't going so well.

2. Hides all flaws. They have a lot of excuses—and, they often pretend to know it all. They don't want you to know the “real” them—the them which may be lacking in some area. They will “try to” make you think they have it together more than they really do—and, you might believe it—for a while. These leaders are often afraid if they appear to be weak (how ironic) you may not respect them—or they might even lose their job.

(Of course, wise leaders learn to build a team which can bring strength around their weaknesses.)

3. Can't accept criticism. They don't take well to correction. They pout. Get angry, perhaps—they may even seek revenge.

4. Quick to pass blame. They can never admit a personal mistake. They are consummate fault-finders. It's always someone else's error. It's the economy, or the culture, or the lack of volunteers. They keep people under their authority by labeling others with the faults of the organization. In fact, according to a weak leader, you probably couldn't do “it” without them.

5. Leads by control. They want you to believe they've “got this.” They don't, but it feels better to them than the alternative. They keep people under their authority, never empower and seldom delegate, because they are afraid of losing their power position.

6. Shies away from difficult decisions. They can't make the hard calls. They can't lead in a new direction because the opposition will be too strong for them. They stay in the safe

zone—sameness is their friend.

7. Appeases critics and complainers. The louder you are, the more likely a weak leader will cave to your demands. They don't want you to be unhappy—especially with them.

I sound rather harsh toward a weak leader—don't I? But, as I said, I've been—and sometimes can be—that leader. I share this as a check for our own leadership. We need strong, capable leadership—especially among our people of faith. Let's lead. Let's lead well. Let's “stand firm” and “let nothing move us” (1 Cor. 15:58).

What would you suggest this youth leader do? {eo}

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