

7 Ways Satan Tries to Destroy a Church

“Be sober and watchful, because your adversary the devil walks around as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8, MEV).

I’m not a pastor who is constantly looking for Satan behind everything which goes wrong. I concentrate my attention on Jesus and encouraging others to follow Jesus—and not to focus on the defeated one.

We are to keep “our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith.”

Yet, I’m fully aware Satan loves to destroy—or attempt to destroy—a church. Obviously, Satan is a limited being—and God’s church is secure. The gates of hell shall never overcome what God started. But, Satan certainly loves to disrupt the work of God’s church—and the work of those who love the church.

Here are seven ways Satan tries to destroy a church:

1. Church conflict. Satan loves business meetings that get out of hand or when two church members have disagreements inside or outside of church. He loves when church members argue about trivial things, such as colors of the carpet or big things, such as whether to add another service. Worship style or pastoral authority doesn’t matter to the evil one. Show him a potential argument and he’s willing to stir the fire—and these days he may use social media to do it.

2. Staff or volunteer burnout. Satan loves to burn out a church volunteer, staff member, or pastor. If he can make them feel they are no longer needed, their work is not appreciated, or they no longer have anything to offer—he feels he’s winning

part of the battle. He loves to spread the lies of discouragement and unworthiness.

3. Rumor spreading. Satan is the stirrer of dissension. He likes to plant little seeds of a juicy story, about someone in the church or community—sometimes even the pastor or staff—and watch them quickly spread. The version, of course, usually grows to a larger portion than reality. Satan likes this too. If you're tempted to repeat something you know you shouldn't, the enemy will make sure you find an opportunity.

4. Busyness. Satan loves to distract churchgoers with a plethora of activity, which produce little results in kingdom-building, but make people feel they've done something. He loves programs, activities, full calendars—if they keep people busy in the church, so they never have time to share the gospel outside the church. And, he has been known to guilt people into staying busy, so they never rest and eventually burnout—then fallout altogether.

5. Lies. Satan attempts to interject what is often called a “half-truth”—just a hint of false doctrine—and then watch it disrupt or divide a body. Of course, we all know half-truth is really just a cleaned up version of a bold-faced lie, but Satan is clever enough to disguise a lie in a way where false teachers gain entry and do damage before being discovered. The enemy also loves to condemn you, convince you you'll never measure up, and remind you all the things you did wrong. He is not afraid to lie about God's grace, His unconditional love, or the Spirit's work in your heart.

6. Scandal. Satan loves when the church makes the news—especially if there's a good, juicy, gossipy headline in the local paper. If it will split, divide or destroy a church body—even better. If it will destroy someone's kingdom calling or work—he'll take it too. He's striving for Christian leaders—he wants to destroy their reputation—the more people thought it was foolproof the better.

7. Marriage and family disruptions. Satan loves to destroy any relationship, but he also goes after key leader's marriages—even the pastor's marriage. He likes to encourage prodigal children—to never return home. He wants to cause families to fight within the church and fight with the church. Satan knows if he can destroy a home, he has a better chance of destroying a church.

Thankfully, there is good news:

“You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4, MEV).

Let's be aware—and stand strong, church.

What other ways have you seen Satan try to destroy a church?

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