

8 of Satan's Sinister Schemes for Attacking Churches

I have studied spiritual warfare for more than 25 years. Here are some of the primary ways I've seen the enemy attack churches:

1. **Congregational division:** I've seen churches divided over budget decisions, paint colors, worship styles, Bible versions, community outreach, global missions, staffing choices, service times, choir robes, small group curriculum and church vans. The enemy still knows this truth: Believers make little dent in the darkness when they shoot each other in the back.
2. **Family breakdown:** We don't need to look far to find this problem in the church. Even the seemingly healthiest families don't always stand in the armor of God to fight off the enemy's arrows.
3. **Hidden sin:** The story is tragic, but true in more than one situation. The church is not growing, and they invite consultants to help them recognize their obstacles regarding infrastructure, programming, staffing and facilities. Some time later, the truth comes out that a more significant obstacle had existed: Someone in church leadership had been living in sin for months.
4. **Transfer growth diversion:** Let me summarize this point—the enemy is seldom threatened when churches grow only by “swapping sheep” with other churches down the street or across the city. Transfer growth often distracts believers from doing evangelism—and thus plays into the enemy's hands.
5. **Self-dependence:** Some churches, I am convinced, would continue to exist for some time even if God withdrew His presence. That is, they operate in their own strength

and ability, but they do it well. Often, they have enough size that decline is almost imperceptible. Though these churches may speak passionately about the “power of God,” they rely more on their own power.

6. **Discipleship distraction:** The enemy delights in churches that have no strategic, effective discipleship strategy. After all, these churches have no plan to teach believers how to wear the full armor of God (Eph. 6:11). They frequently leave new believers to fight battles on their own, select unprepared persons for leadership and then provide no training for those leaders. Because no one disciplined them, their members often lose battles in a spiritual war they did not know existed.
7. **Hopelessness:** It’s easy to get here. Church leaders give all they have to give, yet with few results. The church is dying but unwilling to change. Lay leaders protect their turf. Staff members sometimes battle among themselves. Seemingly, no lives are experiencing transformation. “What’s the point?” the enemy asks. “Why not just give up?”
8. **False teaching:** Most of my work is with evangelical churches, and I don’t often see blatant false teaching. What I see is much more subtle than that:

- Small group leaders teaching unbiblical theology, with no internal system in place to recognize or address that problem.
- No oversight or accountability about curriculum taught in small groups.
- Theologically-suspect material in the literature rack.
- Problematic “recommended reading” in the church library.
- Music lyrics that promote bad theology.
- Poor exegesis of biblical texts.

We do have hope, of course, in Jesus’ words: “I will build My

church, and the forces of Hades will not overpower it” (Matt. 16:18b, HCSB). The enemy is viciously strategic against the church, but we need not let him win. {eo}

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