

9 Signs You're Operating in a Spirit of Lawlessness Instead of God's Kingdom

Editor's Note: This is part 2 of a two-part series. For Part 1, [click here](#).

In my last article, I explained that ever since the divide of the Western and Eastern branches of Christianity in the 11th century, two of the greatest fears of once-united Christendom have been realized: fragmentation and division. The end results have provided an opportunity for a spirit of lawlessness, independence, and empire-building among some insecure (albeit gifted) leaders.

The following are the final nine signs you are an empire builder instead of a kingdom builder (see my last article for the first eight):

9. You love those who follow you and disregard all others.

Empire builders have an “either you are with me or against me” mentality and approach to life. Empire builders will not be friends with a person if they are also connected to the ministry of a rival. One of my regional leaders was told several years ago that he was no longer welcome to preach in a particular church because he was keeping the company of a certain other leader (me). Since empire builders are untrustworthy and use their pseudo friendships as a platform to perpetuate their own empires, they project that same spirit and mentality on other leaders in their region. Thus, they cut off people loyal to other networks and ministries because they suspect others are as untrustworthy as they are!

10. You have a “top down” leadership approach and thus struggle to attract strong, successful leaders.

Empire builders surround themselves with yes men and discourage strong, resourceful leaders from working or partnering with them because it does not fit their top down leadership style. Unlike mature leaders who take a “bottom up” approach, in which they try to lead through consensus with participation of various levels of people taking responsibility in ministry (so that all have ownership in the process), empire builders surround themselves with leaders of ministries they deem less significant. They want leaders who will follow their dictates without meaningful, strategic dialogue.

11. You are driven by self, not led by the Spirit.

Your intense need for affirmation because of your insecurities drives your need for success, not the glory of God and the work of advancing the kingdom. Thus, there is rarely inner peace or rest because you are striving, constantly trying to create a platform and expand your ministry on your own efforts, instead of being led by the Lord and letting Him bring you opportunities and open doors.

12. You are an opportunist when other ministries are struggling.

Empire builders make believe they are concerned when other churches or ministries are struggling, but they attempt to maneuver themselves so they can capitalize on the struggles of other ministries and either seize their property or, more likely, their choicest leaders and key people.

13. Your main goal in life is to build some kind of monument to your success.

Empire builders are obsessed with building bigger and better buildings and acquiring more and more property—even if they have to take on huge debt. The lower their self-esteem, the bigger they have to build to compensate for their internal lack. Unfortunately, they are often risking the future of

their ministry with all this spending. They rarely if ever, think about how their successor is going to fill all these buildings and pay off the mortgage. Remember, there is never any real success without a successor!

14. When possible, you will sabotage the influence and ministry of other leaders you deem a threat to your influence.

Recently, I reunited with a key leader in another country after almost 12 years of disconnect. I tried numerous times to stay connected, but could never understand why there seemed to be some kind of obstruction in our relationship. After speaking for three hours, it finally dawned on us that another leader who was jealous of my influence in this country sabotaged our relationship because he wanted to supplant me as the spiritual covering for this key leader. I have also witnessed firsthand one leader use innuendo and lies about another key leader behind his back in an attempt to stop their influence from spreading to other regions. In instances like these, we need to speak up and defend the honor of those not present in the room.

15. You tend to copy those you are jealous of in your region.

It is said that when someone copies your ideas, it is the highest form of flattery. Empire builders will attempt to replicate and outdo many of the things other key leaders in their region are doing. They may call it something different, but in the end, it is essentially the same model, but with the attitude of making it bigger and better than anything else in their region. It is like Dunkin' (Donuts) or McDonald's trying to reinvent themselves to keep up with Starbucks. It is born out of personal competition and not a pure love for Christ and His kingdom.

16. You are a narcissist in relating to your desires in

life.

Ultimately, empire builders are lovers of themselves. Thus, they will sacrifice the dreams and lives of others so their own dreams can be fulfilled. They will throw everyone and anyone under the bus to advance their goals or save their own skin! Their incredible commitment to the ministry is really only a commitment to advance their own ideals and dreams, which is narcissistic in nature. This is unlike the model of Christ, who laid down His own life for the sheep. Ezekiel 34 speaks about the judgment God will bring on shepherds who use and abuse the sheep for their own pleasure.

17. You tell people that your church or network is the main key in your city for true revival and transformation.

When giving reports about your ministry, you exaggerate the results of your work and utilize self-serving testimonies that back up your claim of spiritual dominance in your region. Many pastors I know have told me of prophecies that have come forth, alluding to the fact that it is their church that is going to start a revival for the nation or their community, or that revival is going to start in their region and go to the world because their region is the gate to the rest of the country. I am tired of hearing these prophecies and so-called words from the Lord.

Unfortunately, some prophets are motivated to give these flattering words so they can get invited back to preach; they know that most inexperienced leaders fall prey to prophetic flattery. That being said, empire builders use these words, visions and experiences to back up their claims that their particular church or ministry is “the church” in their region God is going to use so they can garner the loyalties of unsuspecting and naive sheep, and even pastors.

In my experience, most churches with that attitude are judged by God and actually begin to decline until the leaders repent

of pride. Although it is possible that revival can come through one church to the whole world (think the Azusa Street Revival in 1906), it is the exception to the rule. Community, city and national transformations usually take place when God visits a region or nation, and multitudes of churches receive “times of refreshing” simultaneously. This results in the formation of informal apostolic networks, which partner together to continue to perpetuate the advance of the kingdom of God.

It is sad when God’s people engage in personal empire building and career advancement over ministry and service to His children. Such fleshly habits fuel the toxic leadership we see often in the modern church.

Before I move on to discuss leadership problems, though, I want to offer a word of warning to pastors about the “problem children” they will have to learn to deal with in ministry. I call them the kinds of people nobody can help.

This article is chapter 8 from *Poisonous Power*, Bishop Mattera’s latest book. For more like this, you can purchase your copy on Amazon [here](#).