

The Most Ridiculous Charismatic Doctrine We Ever Created

My friend Charles wanted a mentor. He was eager to learn the ropes of ministry, so he asked an older pastor for training. The pastor agreed—but Charles soon realized the man wanted a valet, not an apprentice. Charles became the man's "armor bearer."

The man never took Charles on hospital visits, involved him in ministry assignments or prayed with him. Instead, Charles was expected to carry the guy's briefcase, fetch coffee and take suits to the cleaners—with no salary offered. In this case, "armor bearer" was a hyper-spiritualized term for "slave."

The bizarre armor-bearer trend became popular in churches more than 20 years ago, but unfortunately, it's still practiced in some circles. It appeals to insecure leaders who need an entourage to make them feel important.

Some pastors have even assigned trainees to serve as bodyguards—complete with dark glasses and concealed weapons. They are instructed to keep people away from the pastor so he doesn't have to talk to anyone after a church service (because the poor preacher might be "drained of his anointing" if he fraternizes with common folks).

Excuse me while I barf.

I'm not sure what is more nauseating: That some ministers think they are discipling young leaders by exploiting them, or that church members tolerate such pompous behavior from a so-called man of God. And we wonder why many young people have stopped going to church?

More than 10 years ago, I decided to focus most of my energy on mentoring the next generation. This became my priority because I met so many gifted men and women in their 20s and 30s who craved role models. Like Charles, they were looking for authentic examples, but they were often disappointed to find that many leaders don't have time for any personal investment.

If you want to make a genuine impact on younger Christians, please make sure you are not infected with the "armor bearer" virus. Take these steps to adjust your attitude:

Get over yourself. Today's insecure leaders don't realize it's the devil tempting them to become rock-star preachers. Fame is too alluring. Before they realize it, their heads have swelled to the size of Godzilla, and ministry has become a means to prove their imagined greatness. A leader with an inflated ego will have zero interest in investing in others. You must tell yourself daily: "It's not about me!"

Stay accessible. Young people today don't just want our sermons. They want to sit down for coffee after the sermon. They want to ask questions. They can listen to a hundred preachers on You Tube, but when you invite them to dinner, offer to pray with them or take them on a mission trip, you mark them forever.

Keep it real. Older Christian leaders have picked up some bad habits that turn off young people. Some ministers preach with affected voices, demand celebrity treatment or manipulate audiences in weird ways to pretend they have a powerful anointing. Please talk in a normal voice when you preach so young people won't dismiss you as a fake. Be transparent, admit your faults and let everyone know you've had struggles. Young people don't want to follow someone who pretends to be perfect.

Pour on the encouragement. Many young people today struggle to

stay disciplined. Some have addictions. And many of them have immature attitudes. But you will never reach them if all you do is point out their faults. You have to win their hearts before you address problems. If you saturate them with the love of a caring father or mother, their spiritual growth will amaze you.

Don't cling to power. Elijah gave a double portion of his mantle to Elisha. Jesus was the Son of God, yet He willingly handed His authority over to His disciples and told them to finish the job. Paul handed his baton to Timothy when he finished his race. This is the biblical model for leadership—a humble willingness to be surpassed by the next generation.

Every good leader should already be thinking of his or her succession plan. If you have a tendency to control, dominate or manipulate people, you must wrestle with God until your ego is crushed. Let the Holy Spirit break you.

Young people today don't want to follow people who strut and swagger. They are looking for mentors who walk with the limp of humility. Don't let the armor-bearer mentality fill you with pride.