

Why Pastors Are Suffering Burnout at Alarming Rate

Amidst lockdowns, declining attendance and a firestorm of political division, pastors are showing increasing signs of burnout.

The percentage of pastors that have considered quitting full-time ministry continues to rise according to a study performed by the Barna Group.

In just over a year, the number of pastors who are considering leaving the ministry has increased from 29% in January 2021, to 42% in March of 2022 when the most recent study concluded.

The main causes for this 13% increase? Stress of the job (56%), loneliness (43%), and political division (38%).

These numbers reveal an even harsher truth that many Christian pastors are going into the field unprepared to deal with the immense stresses that come with the position. These stress factors can lead to a reduced commitment to the position of ministry they had previously felt called to. Without a support network around them, a pastors are feeling abandoned in their time of need.

Pastors that are not considering leaving ministry are experiencing the same difficulties as well. The top three causes that negatively impact their leadership at church are stress of the job (34%), political division (32%), and loneliness and isolation (18%).

So, whether a pastor is considering leaving ministry or not, the devil appears to have his three main weapons he uses against pastors. However, these indicators of how pastors are being spiritually and mentally attacked give their congregations a perfect target on what to pray over them.

The Bible has many verses that show a congregation must support and respect their pastors. In an age that the self-righteous and judgmental attitudes of some are given platforms on digital media, it is imperative that Christians obey the Word of God and lift up their church leadership. Casting judgement is God's job.

The apostle Paul addresses the important role pastors have, and how they need to hold themselves to higher standards or the repercussions of false doctrine will be devastating (Titus 1; 1 Thess. 5:12-28).

Leadership is often lonely, a general of an army does not have many friends, so too a pastor can become isolated from those he or she has sworn to serve. Seeing congregants on Sundays and perhaps a mid-week service is nice, but what is life like for a pastor throughout the rest of the week?

Looking past oneself also appears to play a huge role for pastors that are not considering quitting full-time ministry. The three biggest reasons why pastors are choosing to stay in their ministry are: They believe in the value of the ministry (83%), they feel a duty to stay and fulfill the calling to that ministry (75%), and they are satisfied with their job (73%).

These answers show the disparity between pastors who are prepared for the job of leadership, and those who are not. This does not mean a pastor is not called who is considering leaving ministry, but that their foundation needs strengthening or renewing in Jesus Christ. Also, having a supportive congregation that rallies around them and lifts them up in prayer at all times plays a crucial role in the life of a pastor.

With such a foundation, they can weather the spiritual attacks that the enemy surely will send their way. They are seeing these attacks increase as the culture in America, and the

world, is changing.

One thing is for certain, the church needs its pastors. The Bible says they are essential for the equipping of saints and building up the body of Christ (Eph. 4:11-14), and they are just as essential now as they were when Paul was equipping them. {eoa}

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