

10 Demonic Strategies That Destroy Pastors

As a full-time church leader since 1980, I have observed and experienced various tests and temptations in both my inner life and public ministry. Often my articles are the results of my musings regarding what I observe or sense from the Lord regarding the state of the church, culture and leadership. Today, my musings have led me to think about 10 of the top demonic strategies employed by Satan to destroy a spiritual leader.

It is well known that the devil and his minions target pastors and churches that are a threat to his kingdom. Ignorance of these strategies is a cause for great harm and even the failure of pastors and leaders.

The following are 10 demonic strategies used to destroy pastors:

1. Sacrificing their family on the altar of ministry

One of the most common ploys the evil one uses against spiritual leaders is to tempt them to neglect the spiritual and emotional well-being of their spouse and children because of ministerial priorities. Many pastors who either leave the ministry, have marital challenges or both point to the demands of their local church for their family stress.

A pastor who is not careful can easily neglect their home while trying to save others. What good is it if you win the whole world but lose your children? The demonic principle here is if you can destroy a spiritual leader's family, you can destroy his ministry.

2. Being motivated to succeed by American standards

Many pastors want to have a megachurch because the cultural standards of American success have to do a value system that says "bigger is better." However, by this standard alone, the Apostle Paul was not a huge success, because he usually left a congregation as soon as it had elders who could care for the flock. Hence, he left before the church maximized its growth potential.

When a pastor's main motivation is to have the largest church, it often breeds competition with other pastors that eats away at the soul and inner life of the leader.

If not repented of, this issue can lead to the destruction of the pastor and their ministry.

3. Adulterous soul-ties

In the midst of ministry, there arise many opportunities to minister to those you find attractive in the natural. Consequently, the evil one always makes sure there are several alluring candidates in each congregation who are vulnerable enough to fall into an unhealthy relationship with the pastor. Some of these situations go no further than soul ties, which is emotional adultery; however, many result in sexual sin, which is cause for many a great leader to destroy their legacy and ministry.

4. Spiritual and emotional burnout

Many spiritual leaders attempt to live up to the standards of other pastors and or the expectations of their elder board and congregation. Unfortunately, many spiritual leaders operate outside their grace gifts and function in natural strength resulting in burnout. Even if a leader has a robust prayer and devotional life—they can experience burnout if they attempt to minister in a way not compatible with their internal wiring.

For example, big-picture entrepreneurial leaders cannot function and focus the same as shepherding pastors, whose

primary focus is detail in caring for individuals rather than big projects that compel corporate vision. Leaders need to be who they are—not as others want them to be—or they will be miserable and self-destruct.

5. Doing the work instead of equipping others

When pastors attempt to do the work of the ministry instead of equipping others to do the work of the ministry, they lose balance and grow weary (Read Ephesians 4:11,12). This weakened state causes them to be susceptible to various demonic temptations, leading to a potential scandal or to moral failure.

6. Isolation in life and ministry

Many spiritual leaders have no one they can trust or confide in regard to their life and ministry. This isolation detaches them strategically from other capable leaders both within and without their church and produces a vacuum that begets myopic decisions lacking objective counsel. Isolation also breeds loneliness, which opens a door to seducing spirits, pornography and substance abuse—which wreak havoc on leaders.

7. Diffusing their energy and focus

Many spiritual leaders will not fall for obvious demonic temptations, so the enemy often tempts them with good opportunities that are not “God opportunities.” This lack of focus means they never have the energy and time to accomplish their primary purpose. The old adage “less is more” is a relevant saying in this case. Every time a leader says yes to something, he is saying no to something else that may be even more essential to their mission. This dissipation in focus can subtly destroy the main ministry of a spiritual leader.

8. Pursuing ministry more than pursuing Christ

One of the most common demonic methods used to destroy church

leaders is to tempt them to be so busy with ministerial activities that they become dull spiritually. This results in ministry without true spiritual authority and anointing, which leaves them ineffective.

Many pastors have actually fallen away from their first love—even though they have correct doctrine and work hard in the church. If they do not repent, Jesus will remove their lampstand (Read Rev. 2).

9. Living for the praise of men

As Satan tried to lift himself to attract praise for himself (Isa. 14:2-4), so he tempts spiritual leaders to perform ministry functions for the adulation of men. This egocentric pattern causes leaders to stumble and lose everything they achieved in the flesh because God resists the proud, and pride comes before a fall.

It is no accident that the apostle Peter warns of pride before mentioning that Satan wants to devour believers. Pride leads to destruction because it opens up a door to demonic attacks (see 1 Pet. 5:6-9).

10. Living in self-denial rather than self-awareness

Spiritual leaders often live above the surface of the deep waters of their emotions and inner being. This is because they can often perform ministry function merely with their natural and spiritual gifts while ignoring unresolved issues of the heart.

When leaders live superficial lives, they deny the true condition of their soul and lack self-awareness. They become ticking time bombs, ready to implode and explode. This is why so many people are shocked when their leader falls, since all seemed well on the outside based on ministerial function and preaching.

The enemy is not as naive as church members who gauge the condition of their leader merely on ministry performance rather than discerning the true condition of their souls.

Finally, may the Lord reveal to all His leaders the difference between our true and false self—and what is truly rooted in Him and what is not.