

10 Identifiable Traits of Sexual Predator Pastors

I actually wrote this article four weeks ago but did not feel led to release it until a more appropriate time. In light of the sexual abuse scandals exploding in Hollywood (most recently Harvey Weinstein), I believe now is the appropriate time to also deal with the subject of sexual predator pastors.

My objective in writing this article is not to be negative about church leadership (an overwhelming majority of spiritual leaders I have met and/or know do not fit in this predator category!) but to help bring discernment, repentance and to uncover the works of hell that traumatize many saints. Also, the following missive should not upset spiritual leaders who have nothing to hide.

Predators are those who have a pattern of intentionally using their position of authority to take advantage of church members to gratify their own sexual desires. This pattern of abuse has been historically pervasive in all spheres of society—even in the church and ministry. This is because any narcissist (who usually has a sense of entitlement) tends to abuse the power entrusted to them, which results in taking advantage of those under their influence.

Since I have served primarily in full-time church ministry (not primarily marketplace ministry), I write this article from the perspective of a pastor. However, most of these following traits can be said of predators in any field of work.

In the context of this article, the word “predator” describes a pastor and/or church leader who sexually preys on vulnerable and/or willing congregational members. I have observed that it doesn’t matter how old or how physically unappealing a

spiritual leader is—church members can be attracted to their anointing, title, and position of power.

To be fair—there are probably many more “predator church members” with a seducing spirit who sexually desire their pastor than there are predator pastors in the contemporary church; but the focus of this article is wayward spiritual leaders, not church members.

It is also possible that either a spiritual leader or a congregant can unintentionally fall into an inappropriate relationship because of the depravity of human nature, which doesn't necessarily identify them as a predator. Hence, I do not believe that all spiritual leaders who fall into sin are predators—only those who intentionally use their position of authority to take advantage of a church member to gratify their own sexual desires.

The following are 10 traits of predator pastors:

1. Predator pastors plan a long-term courtship.

Just like those in any other field of work, predator pastors survey their surroundings and plan a long-term courtship that enables them to catch their prey. By courtship, I am referring to a slow, patient process of subtly interacting with a person they are attracted to. This can start off by intentionally bumping into them, having casual conversations that gradually progress from generalities to intimate interchange based on common goals, empathy or ministry collaboration.

This process can take months or even years—all the while, the unsuspecting person innocently plays along with said predator leader. At first, said pastor throws out general bait, then gets more specific if their targeted member takes the bait and grants them more personal access.

If this sounds devious and demonic, it is. Predators are as slow, deliberate and cunning as a serpent and will take sexual advantage of people when they can—no matter how long it takes.

2. A predator seeks out the vulnerable members.

Since pastors make a living observing human nature, they can easily spot a vulnerable member to whom they are attracted. Characteristics they look out for include, but are not limited to: those having marital problems, divorced, lonely singles who have never married, those experiencing great trauma and pain, those newly saved looking for a mentor and so on. Anybody under the purview of a leader that fits any of the above categories is a prime candidate to be sexually objectified by predator pastors.

3. A predator pastor seeks those infatuated with them.

A predator pastor is not stupid and can tell which people feel an attraction and/or are infatuated with them. Characteristics of those infatuated with them include those who incessantly try to make eye contact with them, those always coming specifically to the pastor for personal prayer after their Sunday messages, those always flattering them regarding their preaching and or appearance. Of course, not every believer who does some of the above is infatuated or has evil desires in their heart. Those a predator pastor deems infatuated with them will most likely be among their first targets, because they usually look for low-hanging fruit.

4. Predator pastors offer to pray for the unsuspecting.

Unfortunately, a predator will even make use of the sacred things of God such as prayer to ascertain a fleshly connection with unsuspecting members. In my opinion, it is rarely appropriate when a male pastor offers private prayer regularly to a female church attendee. In my book, this is a red flag in most cases, with few exceptions.

5. A predator offers to become a mentor or guide.

Many attractive members, young or old, would jump at the chance for their lead pastor to mentor them personally. While

in many cases a seasoned male pastor can paternally mentor a lady as a spiritual daughter or apprentice, both the mentor and mentee should keep their discernment level at a peak so as not to allow the enemy and/or a predator spirit to enter the relationship.

6. A predator pastor often feigns concern for their victim's family.

One of the biggest tricks up the sleeve of predator pastor is when they intentionally interact and minister to their victim's spouse and family as a smokescreen that hides their true intentions. Remember, just because there is a close association with family members doesn't negate the fact that a person in that family is a target of a predator.

7. A predator pastor justifies the relationship on biblical grounds.

I have heard of spiritual leaders and lead pastors saying that God gave them a "spirit wife"—which transcends natural marriage and justifies adultery. I have heard of pastors who taught that since the kingdom has no male or female—sexual relations have no negative consequence, because that comes under the purview of the world, not the kingdom. I have even heard pastors say that since King David had his Bathsheba without losing his throne, they can have their own mistress without losing their ministry (they say that no man or church can remove them from their pulpit).

Others have used Old Testament Scripture to justify touching the thigh of a church member as a sign of a biblical covenant between them (I kid you not—I have heard it all!). Pastors who twist Scripture to justify aberrant sexual relations with church members are predators and should be removed from their ministry and defrocked until recognized spiritual leaders attest on their behalf that true repentance has occurred. (Ministerial restoration in these extreme cases should only

take place after years of walking in a process of restoration and proper biblical indoctrination.)

8. Predator pastors abuse their position of authority.

As noted in the introduction, clerical predators utilize their ecclesial title to gain access to the personal lives of those they sexually target. The unsuspecting naively think that just because a person has the title of a spiritual leader, they must have others' best interests in mind. interests in mind.

9. Predator pastors have low self- esteem and go after those under them.

Often, predators suffer with low self-esteem and try to sexually connect only with those they deem inferior (inferior either spiritually or in knowledge and experience). Each sexual conquest they experience makes them feel better about themselves and feeds their ego. Not every pastor with low self-esteem fits this category—but most predators in general probably lack a sense of inner worth and use these illicit dalliances to mollify their inferiority complex.

10. Predator pastors are repeat offenders.

Unfortunately, as with all predators, there is usually more than one victim. If a pastor has been found to prey on one individual, there is a great chance there are several other victims in the congregation. (Each victim thinks they are unique to said predator, but the sad reality is that they were objectified to satisfy predator lust—with the absence of true biblical love).

Finally, may the Lord root out and expose predator pastors who function more like wolves than as shepherds. To repeat what was already stated in a previous point: Just because a spiritual leader falls into sexual sin with a church member does not make them either a wolf or a predator. A predator pastor is one who intentionally uses their position in the

church to take advantage of people on a regular basis. And may the Lord guard all of our hearts so that we never fall away from our call as pastors to feed (not objectify) the flock of God, which was purchased with the blood of Jesus (1 Pet. 5:1-4; Acts 20:28).