

12 Stumbling Blocks to the Gospel You Must Avoid

I preach in many different places and have been involved in evangelism and overseeing a local church for almost four decades.

I found that often it is not the gospel that turns people off, but it is the people carrying the gospel that turns them off! I think that church leadership should remove as many unnecessary stumbling blocks as possible so that as many as possible can be saved.

The following 12 points are based on conversations I have had with millennial leaders as well as the average person on the street.

1. An overemphasis on money – I have been in some services where the offering took more than thirty minutes. I've also witnessed services in which it was common to collect three offerings or more! This gives new people the impression that the Church leadership is more concerned with collecting money than preaching the gospel. This also leaves the Church open to suspicion regarding its motives. I believe money and stewardship should be taught regularly. At times, fundraising should be a focal point in church gatherings, but it should never consistently rival the time given to preaching and teaching the word of God.

2. The opulent lifestyle of the leadership – In many cases, the lavish lifestyle of the pastor and top leaders is a huge stumbling block for the gospel. I believe God wants His children to be blessed by the wise use of their finances and investments. Still, the pastor and leaders should model a lifestyle of simplicity and not extravagance, especially if they lead churches in poor communities. The apostles Peter and

Paul both stated that greed should not be a trait of Church elders (1 Peter 5:2; 1 Timothy 3:3).

3. Scandals – In this day and age, any fool can post something scandalous on social media about a church or leader that has no basis in the truth. We cannot always avoid these things, which is why you should not be quick to believe what people post about others! However, when leaders don't have proper boundaries in their finances and personal life, they tend to cross the line in both. These are the ones that are ripe for a public scandal. From the huge televangelist scandals of the 1980s to the present, scandals give the unbeliever another excuse not to repent and believe the gospel. Every leader should be careful what they text, email, post, and say in public and private. They should have a strong interior life in which they walk in fear of the Lord. This enables all of us to depart from evil (Proverbs 16:6).

4. Duplicitous behavior – When children of believers or the unsaved witness ungodly behavior from their co-workers, employees, neighbors, and friends who claim to be Christians, it is a huge stumbling block to the gospel.

5. Religious titles – Many millennials in certain communities are turned off by the excessive use of elaborate religious hierarchical titles. In some religious settings, everybody has a title like Bishop, Apostle, Doctor, Reverend, Archbishop, and more. Young people are especially turned off by the need for this kind of identification for self-validation.

6. Religious language – People in this generation are not as religious as the previous generation and feel disconnected when a believer constantly uses religious vocabulary in everyday communication. We have to learn to communicate using the “language of Babylon” if we intend to make a strong connection with this generation. We have to teach believers how to think Biblically but speak “secularly” if the gospel will make inroads in culture.

7. Religious images of power – Vestiges of authority and power in the church turn off many young people. They more easily relate to down-to-earth, transparent leadership. They are turned off when they see thrones on a church stage in which leaders are elevated above the congregation, with pastors preaching (down) at the congregation. It gives them the wrong impression of leadership

8. Religious behavior – Sometimes in church, the people have so many protocols, traditions, and rituals, it scares new people into thinking they have to become religious robots to believe. We need to show the world the difference between being religious (which does not save or sanctify a person) and having a relationship with the Lord Jesus.

9. Territorial emphasis over kingdom focus – Many are turned off to the gospel when they see leadership merely focused on their agenda while neglecting the good of their community. God called us to serve our communities, not just build larger church buildings.

10. Programs over people – Many people are turned off to the gospel when they see the Church focus more on events and programs than on connecting to and loving people.

11. Triumphalism – Many young people are turned off to triumphalist prayers and pronouncements about taking cities and nations back for God. They feel called to serve their community, not to take it over by force. We in the Church have to be careful with the language we use to communicate our vision.

12. No community and authenticity – What people crave the most is community. Everyone needs to feel loved and to belong to an entity greater than themselves. Part of the Church's call is to assimilate new believers into the visible Body of Christ through relationships and discipleship. When people come to the Church and only experience program-based Christianity,

they will eventually leave and look for a real community.
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Joseph Mattera's teachings reach thousands of leaders and believers in more than 175 nations. His call is to influence leaders who lead nations.

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