# 13 Ways to Discern Counterfeits in the Church

After being in the pastorate for more then three decades, I am convinced that, in every church, there are prototype leaders who best express the heart, intentions and characteristics of the overseeing visionary of a church and or organization.

This prototype is able to think like the visionary leader and be trusted when it comes to representing them in most situations. These are also the most loyal, faithful and trustworthy of all leaders. In some churches, there is more than one prototype. However, in most cases, there is one person above all who embodies and carries the DNA of the main leader. (It is also possible that a married couple may embody a prototype or that one spouse does and not the other)

There also may be many leaders in the church who are “types” who represent the visionary leader as well, but none do so as good as those in the category as the prototype. In an effort not to get bogged down in minutia, I am going to focus on knowing the difference between prototypes and counterfeits in this article (and not deal with “types”). This is essential to understand because it is your prototype whom you should trust the most and invest the most time in as a possible successor or replacement for you. If not as a replacement, they will serve as the most qualified “second person” in your organization or church.

It is also possible, in my opinion, that a person can serve as a prototype but be surpassed by another person who progresses further and has more passion than a previous prototype. Furthermore, understanding the difference between prototypes and counterfeits is essential if a visionary is going to build a strong foundation of leadership.

To further unpack my view of prototypes, in Genesis 1:26-27, God called humankind to be His image bearers. Hence, we were called to represent Him to the world.

God also commanded us in verse 28 to reproduce ourselves by partnering with Him in procreation by having children through the biblical union of marriage. Thus, human beings categorically are to serve as the main prototypes of God to steward the created order (Ps. 8:4). According to verse 27, both a male and female are needed to reflect God's image, which is why it is important to have one man and one woman committed together in marriage to perpetuate God's image to the next generation.

Individually, we also know that the Lord Jesus is the exact representation of the Father and is His image and likeness to us (Heb. 1:1, 2; John 1:1, 14:6-10.) Also, in the epistles we read in Ephesians 4: 11-12 that the five cluster gifts are called to equip the saints until they attain unto the fullness and stature of Christ (Eph. 4:13-16.) Hence, we see the biblical principle that leaders are called to reproduce themselves in others and establish them in the faith to be like unto Jesus (Rom. 8:29-30.)

In my experience, I have found there are some I have discipled and established who became the main carriers of my DNA and ministry grace (both my biological and spiritual children) and who eventually became prototypes who were able to think, act and minister in many ways like I do.

As we read in Scripture, Moses had Joshua as his prototype, Elijah had Elisha, Jesus had the 12—especially Peter, James and John—Paul had Timothy, and Peter had John Mark.

(In the context of this article, I am not suggesting that counterfeits are not true believers, rather that they are not people to invest a lot of time building into your ministry.) There are also those who many may think are loyal sons to

visionary leaders but turn out to be counterfeits.

In Scripture, we read that Moses had Korah (Num. 16), David had Absalom (2 Sam. 15-17), Elisha had Gehazi (2 Kings 5), Jesus had Judas, and Paul had Demas (2 Tim. 4:10).

## 13 Differences Between Prototypes and Counterfeits

1. Prototypes know your heart. Counterfeits merely mimic your actions.
2. Prototypes have your DNA. Counterfeits crave your ministry.
3. Prototypes love you as a person. Counterfeits love and desire your influence.
4. Prototypes receive you as their spiritual parent. Counterfeits use you as a temporary stepping stone.
5. Prototypes rejoice in your success. Counterfeits rejoice in your failure.
6. Prototypes celebrate your gifts. Counterfeits are jealous of your gifts.
7. Prototypes cover and protect you. Counterfeits want to uncover and expose your weaknesses.
8. Prototypes are committed to your success. Counterfeits are in (silent) competition with you.
9. Prototypes will never (spiritually and emotionally) leave you for greener pastures. Counterfeits will leave as soon as they get what they want.
10. Prototypes will be loyal even when you cannot help them anymore. Counterfeits will forsake you when you cannot bless them anymore.
11. Prototypes are committed to your vision. Counterfeits have their own agenda.
12. Prototypes speak faith to you. Counterfeits speak flattery to you.
13. Prototypes carry your vision. Counterfeits carry their own vision.

In conclusion, it is my opinion that you should discern the

prototypes among you and invest the most time into them. They and the other “types” will faithfully build the kingdom with you. We are to love the counterfeits in our midst, but not trust them with anything of importance.

Of course, it is possible for prototypes to regress and merely become types or counterfeits, and it is possible for counterfeits to repent and become types and prototypes, especially once they read an article like this! However, until a person (especially a counterfeit) proves himself or herself over a long period of time, they are probably still counterfeits.