

7 Big Reasons Pastors Fall Into Sin

(Author's Note: Some of the ideas in this article come from insights shared by Linda Lindquist-Bishop during an email exchange.)

Through the years I have often analyzed why so many pastors fall into sin or resign from church ministry. I came up with a number of primary reasons, which are enumerated in this chapter.

1. Churches are becoming complex enterprises, which some pastors are not equipped to lead.

The typical seminary training one receives to be a pastor usually only slightly touches on the practical elements needed to oversee a church in the 21st century. Learning theology and how to exegete Scripture is not enough. Pastors have perhaps the toughest job in the nation.

The following are some of the issues contemporary pastors grapple with:

Real Estate: Pastors must deal with zoning laws; political leaders; community boards; and bank, business and community leaders.

Many churches of a thousand or more are larger than the average church often because of location; so much of the mega-church phenomenon is based on sociological/geographical reasons, not just anointing, gifting and how much prayer takes place.

Like a McDonald's franchise, one of the most important keys to success is not the quality of a ministry, but its location. In other words, are there ample options for parking and/or is the facility near public transportation; is the facility visible

to the masses of people; are there other considerations? Thus, pastors need to have skill in picking out the right location.

New Facility: Pastors must hire the right architect, lawyer and other consultants to organize a grueling capital stewardship campaign. These campaigns are enough to destroy many churches because the pressure of fundraising can easily become the focus instead of ministering to the needs of the people.

Cash Flow Questions: Pastors must know when to expand their programs and facilities by debt financing (bank loans or other financing), or by using cash and/or consolidating assets and focusing internally for growth.

Networking: Today's urban pastor must have access to political leaders and key community leaders in order to successfully tap into all the resources available to fund the programs needed to meet the vast needs people have—especially in an urban context.

Business/Administration: Most pastors are good preachers, but I have noticed that many of the most successful churches are those run by leaders with a business background. This is why I tell all those training for the ministry to get at least an associate degree in business finance.

Just having anointed services on Sunday cannot build a successful church. You must have continual vision casting, strategic planning with three- to five-year goals, implementation and administration of the vision, leadership development, discipleship training, team building, selecting and funding the proper gift mix for your staff and much more.

2. Learning how to relate the gospel to your audience.

Many preachers are answering questions their audience is not asking. Pastors need to have the skill and the information to gauge the demographic makeup of their community and know how

to connect to their communities. Connection is based on the age, ethnicity, economic and religious context of a community.

Pastors need to constantly monitor the sociological trends in their communities so they can raise up the leadership necessary to relate to the people who will be the dominant groups in their communities. For example, because of gentrification, a community like Harlem may be mostly Caucasian in coming years. African-American pastors in this community need to know how to adjust their outreach to their community. Or, consider opening up satellite churches or ministries to reach those presently in their church who may move to the suburbs. Thus, pastors need to skillfully exegete their communities, not just the Scriptures.

3. Leadership development.

How does the church effectively transform new believers from babes into responsible, mature members? How does the church effectively mentor potential leaders who have 10-hour workdays and two to three-hour daily commutes to and from work? Usually those with the potential to lead already have responsible positions at their jobs. Thus, they are already spent and weary before they come to church and minister.

Pastors must answer the question: Are we going to be a program-based church, or are we going to depend on empowering lay leadership for shepherding (the cell church model)?

4. Board development issues.

Pastors have to answer these questions: What is the biblical model of local church government? What model of church government will we follow? Also, who should the pastor select to be on the church's board of trustees? This changes based on the maturity of your leadership, type of church government, the age of your church, the history of your church and if the pastor is the founder or entering an already-developed board.

5. The lack of a safe place.

Most pastors lack true accountability. Organizational accountability in most denominations does not ensure true accountability based on vulnerable, transparent relationships. Many will not go to those over them or peers within their own denominations for fear they will be stigmatized and will not be able to move up in the organization.

All pastors need other pastors over them as mentors and peer relationships with others they can trust in transparent relationships for self-renewal. Legendary English spiritual leader John Wesley once said, "The Bible knows nothing of solitary religion. Christianity is a religion of fellowship."

Most pastors feel isolated and alone, even in the midst of their congregation. Many pastors are comfortable in the pulpit because they hide behind their anointing and their ministry gifting but are socially dysfunctional, never allowing anyone to really know them or relate to them to establish a real emotional connection. Even when they are with other pastors, the bulk of their conversations are about ministry and not about personal issues like marriage, the state of their inner lives or the challenges of raising children.

6. Tension between spiritual leader role and organizational leader role.

Many pastors do not know how to distinguish their roles as pastor/shepherd from leader of the organization in which they have to hire and fire, based on maintaining a spirit of excellence in business. There is great stress in knowing when and how to fire staff who may be faithful members in the church the pastor is shepherding. They need skill (training) as to both the business and spiritual aspects of the church.

Another problem is that many pastors do not know how to balance their time between administration and spiritual preparation, and are spending 40 hours per week in

administration. Acts 6:4 teaches administration is primarily the work of deacons, yet a large percentage of pastors are neglecting their time in studying Scripture and praying in the presence of God. This results in pastors burning out because the needs of the people are pulling on their grace gifting to come forth, but they are not able to give it because their spiritual tank is empty.

7. Compassion fatigue.

Many pastors are so used to just giving and giving that they do not know how and when to receive. Sometimes I would come to places where I was working so hard for so long that I actually felt guilty when I had some time off for rest; I literally did not know how to rest. On many vacations, I needed at least three days before my mind and emotions caught up to my body so that I was able to mentally adjust to taking time off.

God has placed sacred rhythms in our lives so that there would be regular times of refreshing and renewal. God calls the Sabbath “a sign between us and Him.” What is the sign? That He is God and that our church or work will not fall apart when we take time off because He is the one building the church (Matt. 16:18-19).

Life is not a marathon, but a series of 100-meter dashes. We need to continually take time to rest and regroup before we go out to run the race again. Because I am filled with so much vision, I often hate the fact that my body gets tired and needs six to eight hours of sleep per night. But then I realize that God did this on purpose—not to rest my body but primarily to rest my mind and emotions so that I can start each morning with a fresh perspective.

Most pastors can trace burnout to not regularly replenishing their souls with rest, prayer, reading, fellowship, exercise and caring for their emotional lives. We can renew ourselves by doing things that we enjoy; it does not always have to be

prayer, study, or a spiritual or religious discipline. It can be viewing art, playing a sport, spending time with one's spouse, having a social life or simply having a hobby that you enjoy. {eo}

Be sure to check out Part 2 of this article tomorrow!

This article is chapter 5 from Poisonous Power, Bishop Mattera's latest book. For more like this, you can purchase your copy on Amazon [here](#).