

7 Reasons Why Some Believers Follow Rock Star Pastors

The church has seen the rise of “celebrity cult status” pastors who act like spiritual superstars.

In this article I define superstars as those who act as little gods who believe they are above everybody else.

They walk around with an entourage and body guards and are inaccessible to family, friends, high level staff and peers, and are an unaccountable island to themselves.

Furthermore, no matter how much these leaders violate biblical ethics, they still maintain their leadership position because most of their followers are blinded by their devotion; Many of these superstars have started in the ministry for the right reason but because of undealt-with emotional dysfunction related to their youth—they carry these dysfunctions over into their ministry and church family.

There are some social and psychological reasons for this aberrant behavior—both from the vantage point of the leader and their followers.

The following are some of these symptoms and reasons:

1. Many Christians need a male figure to emulate

Many believers come from dysfunctional family backgrounds and need a male figure hero to emulate as a father figure. Some folks view their spiritual leader as a surrogate father, hence they will be protective of said leader to the point in which their emotional connection and loyalty clouds biblical truth.

2. Many Christians have no identity of their own and live vicariously through their leader

Those without a healthy self identity gravitate towards a strong, confident leader with a compelling vision to the point in which their own individuality is subsumed or fragmented. Thus, this creates a vacuum of being and essence which makes them vulnerable to a charismatic leader. In other words, this is how false prophet Jim Jones was able to lead 900 well-educated followers into committing corporate suicide in Guyana in the 1970s.

3. Many believers have a strong sense of failure and live through the success of their leader

Many people live a boring life without purpose and feel that they have more meaning when vicariously live their life through a person they deem successful.

4. Many followers lack their own intimate knowledge of Christ and are ignorant of Scripture

Unfortunately, most Christians are Bible illiterate and will believe anything their leader teaches them—even if it is heretical. Hence, their leader can live a life or lead their church in a way not congruent with Scripture and they wouldn't even know it!

5. Many stay connected to the leader primarily because of their social community

After being in a church for several years, folks usually assimilate into that particular faith community (which is a great thing in most cases) and build their social network around their church life and ministry. If they leave their church, they have to cut off many of these social ties. Thus, they will continue in a church even if the leader is living an ungodly life full of pride, abuse and manipulation.

6. Many are connected to a superstar leader because it gives them religious status.

There are many people I have met who attend a certain church only because they have a lot of members—even if they are not being disciplined or ministered to in a personal way. They get fed from other sources but remain because in their church because the celebrity status of their leader gives them status with other Christians in their city.

7. Many have low self-esteem and don't recognize when they are being abused or manipulated

Those with low self-esteem will allow others to abuse, disrespect and even manipulate them because they don't have enough self-dignity to disapprove or even recognize it. Many of these folks were abused or neglected at home and live with a sense of guilt and feel an unconscious need to have authority figures who act the same way as their parents did (to satiate their feelings of guilt in some cases).

In closing, in rare instances where I perceive believers start attending our local congregation who come from these dysfunctional churches, I am not as quick (as usual) to discourage their attendance but am willing to open up our congregation to them as a place for them to receive personal ministry and (hopefully) flourish in their faith.

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