

Beware of Spiritual Lone Rangers

In this pandemic era, many churches are airing their services online and encouraging members to meet in homes. And the “house church” movement is growing as more and more mature believers step out in faith to start non-traditional congregations. The church is breaking out of its traditional box. That’s a good thing.

What is not good, however, is that untested, untrained and unqualified people are also seizing this opportunity to start ministries when they have no business doing so. I call these people Lone Rangers because they have no mentors. They are accountable to no one, yet they claim to be experts all on their own. They take orders from no one, yet they are happy to be in charge.

Suppose a church starts a network of home meetings and provides practical training for the leaders of those groups. Then imagine that one couple in the church decides to start their own group without attending the leadership training sessions because they feel they don’t need to comply with the pastor’s rules or standards. Their spiritual pride and independence infects others, and before you know it you have a split in the church.

These types of divisions have plagued the church since the first century, when biblical writers such as Jude warned about “wild waves” and “wandering stars” who spread dissension and false doctrines (Jude 1:13, NASB).

Lone Rangers are dangerous, even though they often don’t realize they are being used by Satan to tear down God’s work. Like the rebellious Korah in the Old Testament, they question godly authority and claim spiritual superiority. Here are six

indicators of a Lone Ranger spirit. Heed the warning signals!

1. **Lone Rangers are super-spiritual.** Their feet rarely touch the earth. They may spend lots of time in prayer (or claim to), and they may even fast or impose severe discipline on themselves. But their relationships are dysfunctional. Remember: Jesus did not live His life like a guru, floating around while dispensing spooky wisdom. He lived in the real world and interacted in a practical way with people He loved. So should we.
2. **Lone Rangers often claim special revelation.** Paul warned the Colossians about prideful people who were always seeing visions from God. He said: "Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen" (Col. 2:18a).

God speaks to us through His Holy Spirit, and He can use dreams, visions or prophetic words. Yet His message always flows with love and brings peace. On the contrary, a spirit of weirdness usually follows hyper-spiritual people who claim to receive constant revelations. Beware of a person who claims they always know what God is saying about everyone and everything.

3. **Lone Rangers can't submit to authority.** Renegade leaders believe they are more gifted than pastors or other spiritual leaders. Therefore they find it impossible to receive instruction or correction from anyone. They have no mentors because they feel they are spiritually superior. They also are prone to gossiping about a leader or spreading false accusations. Because of their pride, they separate themselves from the body of Christ.
4. **Lone Rangers crave attention.** Perhaps because they lacked affirmation and love when they were growing up, Lone Rangers are desperate to be the center of attention. Their emotional deficit pushes them to seek

approval. Some people who seek to serve as intercessors or counselors, or even as members of the worship team, may actually need inner healing before they can be effective in these public roles. If you put these people on a stage before they are healed, you will regret it!

5. **Lone Rangers have a victim mentality.** Most of the Lone Rangers I know believe they are constantly being attacked by the devil—as if they are his biggest threat. The slightest problem in life—from a traffic ticket to a hangnail—becomes evidence of a demonic conspiracy against them. And if a pastor brings needed correction to them, it is perceived as a spiritual attack.
6. **Lone Rangers often end up in deception.** Renegades who reject correction or spiritual authority are headed toward disaster. Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, started that cult after he declared that all Christian denominations were false churches. He cut himself off from the body of Christ and started the biggest heresy of the 19th century. People who become so focused on their spiritual superiority will end up denying Jesus and justifying their own sinful behavior.

Church should be a healthy place. We need to train leaders who are humble, teachable, submissive to authority, down-to-earth, servant-hearted and emotionally mature. Don't let Lone Rangers do their damage. {eoa}

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