

Seven Ways Satan Usurps Authority in a Church

Satan is the author of rebellion, which is the root of all sin. He rebelled against God's rule and continues to rebel against God's rule through willing people who rebel against spiritual authority. This is the major way churches are divided and even destroyed.

The following are eight ways Satan deceives people into dividing or weakening local churches.

I. Spiritual Equality Syndrome (Num. 12:1-10)

Numbers 12:1-10 speaks of when Miriam and Aaron almost led a rebellion against Moses based on their assumption of hearing from God in addition to Moses. Thus, they thought Moses should not be the main visionary to give overall direction to the people.

Though it is true that the Spirit of God speaks to all who are children of God (Romans 8:14-16) the guidance for a church is not promised to anyone except to the senior leader and, under their direction, the elders of a church.

II. Uncovering the Leader's Weakness Syndrome (Gen. 9:20-27)

In Genesis 9:20-29 Noah's son Ham saw his father while he was drunk and naked. He uncovered his father by pointing this out to his brothers Shem and Japheth. As a result, Ham and his descendants were cursed by God, even though the personal sin of his father that was uncovered was true and not a lie. This illustrates that even key biblical leaders were not perfect yet they were forgiven and commissioned. Noah's sin was wrong but the sin of his son was worse because it had the potential to foster rebellion against authority.

III. The Co-Leadership “Multi-Headed” Syndrome (Num. 12:1-8)

In Numbers 12:1-8 Aaron and Miriam were tempted to be equal with Moses and be co-leaders because they were older than Moses and judged him according to the flesh and not by the call of God. (Age is not the bottom line in senior leadership.) Having more than one senior head quickly becomes a two-headed monster. I have never seen dual headship work for more than a few years. When “No. 2” men aspire to be “No. 1” men it divides churches and gets ugly! Some “No. 2” men are not gifted enough in leadership to ever be considered “No. 1” men. It takes humility and obedience to the Lord to recognize the limits of one’s leadership and measure of authority (Rom. 12:3-4; 2 Cor. 10:10-14).

IV. The Super-Spiritual Syndrome

Some think they are more spiritual than the senior pastor. This is usually because all they want to do is jump into the river and soak. They want deep teachings and long, passionate worship, but don’t care about evangelism, new people or practical management issues. They only selfishly care about themselves and want to experience an exclusive believer’s service every Sunday. These people hide behind super-spiritual talk and always say they are inspired by the Holy Spirit when they speak and give direction to the church. They subtly bring correction to the pastor and leaders in their conversations and pray accusatory prayers against leadership, but their main agenda is to commandeer church government and give direction to the church.

The simple gift of prophecy as described in 1 Corinthians 14:1-3 doesn’t include directing other believers or the church but only involves edification, exhortation and comfort. Since God is a God of order He will give overall direction primarily to those who are part of the leadership. Satan comes as an angel of light through those who hide behind “spirituality” to point the congregation towards themselves and their “superior

spirituality" instead of submitting to the leading of the Lord through the senior pastor and elders serving with them.

V. Financial Priority Syndrome (John 12:1-8)

In the same way Satan entered into Judas Iscariot and inspired him to complain that the apostles should have used their monies to aid the poor, some people readily criticize the way a local church handles its money even before understanding the whole financial situation! This shows us again that Satan comes as an angel of light and uses religious reasons to accuse spiritual leadership to ignorant and unsuspecting people.

VI. The Multiple Agenda "Vision" Syndrome (1 Cor. 1:10)

The Bible admonishes local churches to have absolute unity in mind, heart, purpose and language. When someone has a different vision or agenda other than that of the senior pastor and mission of the church, then that person will cause division even if he or she doesn't speak evil against the church. Any vision other than the overarching vision of the church distracts from the main vision, thus weakening and dividing the hearts of the people away from their primary mission. If a person is fully supportive of the vision of an apostolic local church with a God-inspired goal of nurturing and releasing people into their destinies, then dying to their individual visions is the first step. This is because a person's biblical vision will most likely be maximized in the context of the greater corporate vision of a local church.

VII. The Absalom Syndrome (2 Sam. 15:1-6)

David's rebellious son Absalom leveraged his leadership position in Israel to utilize the satanic tactic of stealing the hearts of the people away from his father. He did this by sympathizing with every person's needs so he could emotionally connect to them instead of his father. Any secondary leader who ministers out of insecurity has a great need to be loved

and liked and will sometimes steer people away from the vision of the church and senior pastor, and point others to themselves. Paul the Apostle warned that wolves will come and do this, not sparing the flock (Acts 20:30).

Gradually, before a senior pastor even realizes what is happening, there is another church and faction within the church that is more loyal to the secondary leader than to the senior pastor. This either forces the senior leader to resign because he or she has lost the majority of the influence, or the church will experience a significant split with many casualties among the innocent sheep.

Joseph Mattera is overseeing bishop of Resurrection Church and Christ Covenant Coalition, in Brooklyn, New York, and author of numerous books, including *Ruling in the Gates: Preparing the Church to Transform Cities*. Follow him on Facebook or visit him online at .