

10 Stupid Things Ministers Should Never Do

If you aspire to ministry, don't be stupid. Decide now to avoid these obvious pitfalls.

I had the privilege of sharing a pulpit with Dr. Mary Ann Brown two times. She was bold, prophetic and painfully blunt. People who hate women preachers hated her even more because of her no-nonsense sermons—always delivered in her Texas twang. She would get her audience laughing and then skewer them with a hot blade of truth.

When this spiritual giant died last month at age 73, I remembered the last words she said to me when we were together at a conference in Chicago in 2011. After lamenting the fact that so many ministers in the United States were failing, Mary Ann locked eyes with me and said with stern, motherly authority: “Lee, please don't ever get stupid.”

I knew exactly what she meant—and I've pondered her words often, especially since her death. I don't want to be stupid; I want to finish well. So how can we avoid spiritual stupidity? We can start by avoiding these 10 mistakes that have become common in our movement during the past decade. If you are a minister, or if you aspire to be one, please decide now that you will never copy these behaviors.

1. Take illegal drugs. I know people who never got complete deliverance from their drug habit—and then when the pressures of ministry grew intense they turned to illegal substances to escape. That's stupid! If you aren't in control of your actions 100 percent of the time, you have no business in the ministry.

2. Reject accountability. The Lone Ranger may have been a great comic book hero, but isolation doesn't work in real

life. Lack of accountability is stupid! If you don't answer to people smarter than you, you are an accident waiting to happen—and you're going to hurt God's people. You have no right to be in authority if you are not under authority.

3. Beat or abuse your wife. The Bible says in 1 Peter 3:7 that God will not listen to your prayers if you mistreat your wife. If you are an abuser (and even if you are a master at hiding your sin from others), the Lord will oppose you until you seek help.

4. Surround yourself with adoring fans. Years ago, fallen PTL founder Jim Bakker said his biggest mistake was planting "yes men" around him instead of people who had the guts to challenge his bad decisions. If you aren't willing to invite input—including criticism—from your followers, you are a weak leader headed for disaster.

5. Fabricate spiritual gifts to impress others. In our movement there's a lot of pressure to produce the sensational in order to keep people entertained. But if you stoop so low as to fake a healing, conjure up a false prophecy or push someone to the floor, the Holy Spirit will step aside and let you run the sideshow without His power. It's stupid to mix strange fire and risk offending God!

6. Be lenient toward sexual sin. In our movement today we celebrate the grace message while frowning on anyone who dares to identify fornication, adultery, homosexuality or pornography as sins. If you are casual about sexual sin in your own life, or if you don't require purity among those you lead, you are stupid.

7. Manipulate people during the offering time. Ministers often twist Scriptures and use hypnotic mind games to raise funds on Christian television. Nobody challenges their fraud, so it seems they get away with it. Be assured that these people will answer to God one day for their deception. You are

stupid if you try these tactics in your church.

8. Refuse to share power. I meet many ministers who have been leading their churches or organizations for 30 years and yet have no succession plan in place. That is dumb! You are not going to live forever. Train the next generation now so they will be ready to lead in your place—and do it before you keel over from a heart attack!

9. Teach exotic doctrines rather than the core truths of the Bible. We charismatics tend to feed people a “flavor of the month” in order to satisfy the craving for angelic visitations, third-heaven visions, gold dust, gold teeth, manna, angel feathers, heavenly portals and indoor rain clouds. But history has proven that those who make spiritual manifestations a primary focus always get tricked into deception. We will be wise if we keep the main thing the main thing. Focus on Jesus!

10. Become an egomaniac. In the past 10 years some of America’s biggest religious stars have gone totally loony because of pride. They require private jets, body guards and personal chefs while maintaining a cold aloofness from the people they are called to serve. If you let Satan dupe you into becoming an arrogant ministry diva, you are stupid. Repent, get on the same level with the people, and start acting like Christ instead of a rock star.

In memory of my late friend Mary Ann Brown, I pass on her advice to you: “Please don’t ever get stupid.” Let’s grow up, reject foolishness and aim to finish well.

(Click [here](#) to read Jennifer LeClaire’s follow up: 10 More Stupid Things Ministers should never do.)

J. Lee Grady *is the former editor of Charisma and the director of The Mordecai Project (). You can follow him on Twitter at leegrady. His latest book is Fearless Daughters of the Bible.*