

These Lies Are Fueling Witchcraft Movement in the Church

People are leaving the church in droves, and most fingers are pointed at the senior pastor.

Triggered. That's the best way to describe a lot of people when the topic of "going to church" is brought up. You see, there's a group of ex-church goers who are so angered by their previous church experiences that any suggestion of support of the local church triggers them. I've had interactions with many people who tense up the moment I start a discussion about the church and the importance of being rightly aligned and connected with leadership.

Let me be clear: I'm a fierce advocate of the local church. I'm also a passionate visionary. I see well beyond the current structure, and I regularly rock the boat and challenge systems, motives and traditions that exist within the local church. I believe we should stay connected, submitted and tender-hearted within the church while we are, with wisdom and honor, advocating for reformation.

Sadly, many who share my passion for revolution within the church have gone the route of abdication, accusation and hibernation. They have abandoned their post while pointing fingers at pastors and leaders who didn't measure up to their standards. They end up spiritualizing their decision to stop going to church so they can, as they say, "be the church." The problem? You can't be the church if you don't go to church. I dealt with that in my article, "You Are NOT the Church: The Scattering Movement."

I also address the abandonment of the church in my book *Covens in the Church*. People are leaving assignments and putting the

church at great risk. It's a movement of witchcraft and rebellion in the name of God.

A key reason why people are so disenchanted with the church is simple: Their expectations of what pastors are supposed to do and how the church is supposed to function are wrong.

Misconceptions About the Role of Pastor and the Church

'The Pastor Is Supposed to Be My Close Personal Friend'

There are many disappointed people who expected the pastor of the church they once attended to become a close personal friend. While it's true that pastors will have friends, and it's possible to be counted among them, that should not be the goal or the expectation.

In fact, it's a bit ludicrous to presume the pastor has to squeeze time, emotional energy and attention to you into his very busy and important life. The pastor's role is not to be your close, personal bud. It's to be a faithful leader and to watch out for your soul.

Stop and think about this for a moment. Do you have unlimited time and energy to give to literally everyone who chooses you as their new friend? How would you do it? Would you go out to lunch with them every day? What about hundreds of others who have the same demands? It simply doesn't make sense.

We need to honestly understand just why pastors may choose not to be our close, personal friend. Here are a few:

—His mandate is mostly to pray and study the Word.

Now in those days, as the disciples were multiplied, there was murmuring among the Hellenists against the Hebrews, because their widows were overlooked in the daily

distribution. So the twelve called the multitude of disciples together and said, "It is not reasonable for us to leave the word of God and serve tables. Brothers, look among yourselves for seven men who are known to be full of the Holy Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint over this duty. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word (Acts 6:1-4).

It's concerning today that pastors, instead of spending loads of time on their knees and in the Word, are being pulled in every direction to visit people in the hospital, meet with visitors to the church, answer the phone at all hours of the night and meet the needs of everybody in the congregation.

One of my favorite stories about Mike Bickle of the International House of Prayer in Kansas City brings clarity to this point. A person of great influence was flying through Kansas City and wanted to meet with Mike during his layover. Mike was unavailable. The layover was during Mike's daily scheduled prayer time. He politely declined the meeting.

We need a new breed of leader who will install a team that will take care of the people and then focus on meeting with God, getting wrecked in His presence, gaining powerful revelation in the Word and, as a result, stand behind the pulpit with fire in their eyes and a tremble in their spirit.

—He may not have sufficient time or emotional energy to invest in another close relationship.

Related to the point above, pastors are busy. Really busy. Even those who lead small churches can't be expected to be best friends with everybody. I've heard people say that if they can't be close friends with all, they should resign from ministry. Ridiculous.

Further, do you know how many ministry families are being torn apart because of the pastor having absolutely unreal,

unnecessary demands placed on them? Burnout is real. Pastor's kids are often neglected. Pastor's wives often live with great resentment against the church and those who are crushing her husband under the weight of their demands.

This study by Robin Dunbar is revealing:

Is there a limit to how many people you can actually be friends with at a time?

According to psychologists, the answer is yes. A study by Robin Dunbar, an evolutionary psychologist at University of Oxford, shows the average person can only manage five close relationships at a time.

So, if your church has more than five people attending, chances are the pastor simply won't have room for another close friend.

-He may not like you.

This one may sting. I'm confident you don't have a blast hanging out with everybody. You have your favorites. So do pastors. It's natural. It's normal. Your personalities might not match. You might be clingy, weird, codependent, high maintenance or unbalanced. He'll be most effective ministering to you from afar.

This doesn't mean he doesn't love you. It doesn't mean you can't be a friend at a less intimate level. It doesn't mean he doesn't care about you. He just isn't going to take you on vacation or hang out in his pajamas watching football with you.

You have yet to prove yourself or invest in the ministry.

Smart leaders will invest mostly in those who have proven themselves faithful. Jesus devoted himself to 12, and then at

a closer level to three. Pastors will hang with those who share his vision, who are fierce defenders of the church and who don't exhibit selfish tendencies. The pastor has a serious call of God to lead the church into an impossible vision, and he needs people around him who will empower that vision.

If you are dead weight, they will love you, pray for you and do their best to awaken you, but they won't—and shouldn't—be close friends with you.

God told him not to get too close to you.

There have been a number of people over the last two-plus decades of ministry that I was specifically warned about. God told me not to befriend them. Some had devious intentions. Others would be a time-suck. Others would want to be inappropriately close to my family and me. Healthy boundaries were necessary.

Sometimes, my wife would be the one to wave the red flag of warning about an individual. It's always wise to listen to a discerning spouse. And, often, God didn't tell me exactly why I should keep my distance. I simply had to obey.

Other reasons God may keep you from a close personal relationship with your pastor abound. God may want you in a desert season. He may want you to pass the test of rejection. He may want you more focused on God than man. The list goes on and on.

You would be better served connecting with others in the church.

While a pastor's charisma and maturity may be appealing, they may not be the best fit for friendship. It would be best to honor their role in your life as teacher, intercessor and leader while enjoying deep relationships with a few others in the church. The fit would simply be much better.

You wouldn't be able to handle his strong leadership in a close relationship.

Good leaders will slice and dice you in love, challenge you to the extremity of your limits and rebuke you, again in love, for deficiencies that remain unaddressed. Most people can't handle such a direct approach. Their skin isn't thick enough.

A well-known, influential senior pastor of a huge megachurch met with my wife and me in his office one day. I had ministered with him in prayer events and, while we were not close friends by any means, we were friends. He had access to my life. At this particular meeting, he reached into my soul, pulled it out and threw it against the wall. He challenged me. He was very direct, and the meeting was extremely upsetting. My wife cried on the way home—and several times thereafter. We were rocked, but we took his counsel to heart, though I didn't know if I agreed with everything, and I felt he was quite harsh about simple philosophical differences. I was troubled.

The next week, we had another scheduled meeting. We were anxious to see him again in hopes of asking some questions and gaining clarity. We were also a bit uptight as we didn't know what else he might challenge us with.

To our surprise, he looked me in my eye and simply said, "You passed the test." Then he hugged me.

He went on to explain that he was intentionally pushing me to my limit, challenging things he knew I held dear in ministry and wanted to see how I'd respond. He said other pastors and leaders have stomped out of his office in pride and indignation after similar confrontations.

Though I admittedly was angry after the first meeting, I also understand that's the culture within structures led by leaders with strong personalities and cutting-edge leadership abilities. They don't play around.

He is mostly focused on connecting with his leaders, who, in turn, train others to connect with the body.

Pastors should be spending most of their time and energy on a small number of leaders, not the entire body. Those leaders will then multiply what they received into others.

Do you think Moses could be best buds with every one of the millions who left Egypt? That's ridiculous. It's also unnecessary. There's a better way to ensure people in the church are connected.

You will surely wear yourself out, both you, and these people who are with you, for this thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to do it by yourself. Now listen to me, I will advise you, and may God be with you: You be a representative for the people to God so that you may bring their disputes to God. And you shall teach them the statutes and laws and shall show them the way in which they must walk and the work that they must do. Moreover, you shall choose out of all the people capable men who fear God, men of truth, hating dishonest gain, and place these men over them, to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. Let them judge the people at all times, and let it be that every difficult matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they shall judge, so that it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. If you shall do this thing and God commands you so, then you will be able to endure, and all these people also will go to their place in peace.” {eo}

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