

These Weird Practices in the Church Only Hinder God's Will

Editor's Note: This is part 2 of a two-part series. For part 1, [click here](#).

We need to nurture godly relationships, but not at the expense of the mission. The foxhole of ministry is where friendships are forged. As we contend for revival together and war in the supernatural realm, our connections become more valuable and much deeper than we could ever imagine.

Excessive Pastoral Care

Related to the above point, but still distinct, in many churches, we are seeing the “hospital mentality” drive the day-to-day. I’ve heard many people comment that the church is to be a hospital. It is not.

The church is a governmental, missional army of people who are unified, equipped and advancing against the enemy. It’s a weapon of war.

Yes, in battle there will be many wounded warriors, but this calls not for a hospital but rather a MASH unit. We tend to the wounded and minister healing to them for the purpose of seeing them return victoriously to the battlefield.

We need to stop putting pressure on the pastor to be continually tending to our every whim instead of moving ahead, blazing trails with his sword aimed squarely between the eyes of the enemy.

In fact, it’s a healthier and stronger move to see the body rally around the wounded instead of expecting the general, the leader, to be the sole person expected to tend to them. A spiritual community that’s focused on running the race together will be much better equipped to reach the hurting

than a single leader who is being pulled in too many directions to count.

Of course, there are times the senior leader must break away to go after the one who has lost their way, but that's the exception, not the rule.

The Show

Again, let's find the pavement people, those who are not drawn to the show, to the theatrics, to the fog and lights, and who simply contend in prayer.

I'll admit that atmospheric supplements such as video, lighting and other effects are benign. They aren't evil or good. They are aids, but too often it just gets ridiculous. The draw of the church should be the undeniable presence of God, not a carefully produced environment.

This point takes us right through and well beyond the lights and fog. Although I've seen some church services that are terribly disorganized and slopped together, many churches that are forward-thinking put great thought into every moment and everything the people will experience. For example, is anybody else tired of the visiting minister orchestrating a circus atmosphere by attempting to push every soul with enough force to create an Instagram-worthy altar of people sprawled out all over?

What about perfectly timed and controlled services? Everything is produced as precisely and efficiently as a Broadway show. When I see a church schedule with 9 a.m., 10:30 a.m. and 12 p.m. Sunday-morning services, I'm pretty sure it's a church best skipped.

Let's shut down the production and the carefully controlled and humanly ordered services and simply worship, pray, get equipped and see the presence of God overwhelm us. That's church.

Titles

One of the most amusing meetings I've ever had occurred several years ago in Detroit. A local pastor whom I had never met requested that we get together over coffee. We did, and it took everything I had not to smirk between sips of java. He berated me for allowing people to call me by my first name. I had to make sure I clearly understood what he was saying. Yes, he actually was upset that people called me John! He didn't allow anybody even to know what his first name was, and he expected everyone to call him by his title. It was such a strange and humorous conversation!

Now, please hear me on this. I know many leaders who do go by their title. Pastors, apostles and other leaders do value the distinction that comes from putting a title before their name. Many of these are amazing and godly men and women, and I absolutely do call them by their title if they prefer I do. I respect them and I honor them with abandon.

In fact, when leading a church, I did find myself struggling with this issue. My preference was for people to call me John. However, many wanted to call me "Pastor." I was OK with that, except it caused some functional problems. Why? My office isn't pastor. That much is clear. While I don't care to identify myself by my office, others, including leaders in my life, have acknowledged a prophetic/apostolic office. So, now what? Do people call me Apostle John? They have, and it's OK, but honestly, I cringe a little when they do. The reason I'm bringing up this point is because I agree that titles can be very helpful when they designate function and expectations in ministry. When people presumed me to be a pastor, with all of the gifts and skills of a pastor, their expectations were frustrated as I couldn't meet them. However, when they understood I was prophetic/apostolic, they began to value me in that role. Again, titles can define function, and that's fully appropriate.

However, like this pastor (or apostle, or doctor, I'm not sure) in Detroit, it can get unhealthy. I'd challenge pastors, prophets, apostles or others to consider allowing people to just call you by your name. It removes some unnecessary barriers and weirdness from the relationship. If you do prefer a title, that's OK; just handle it in a healthy way and understand that you may not be as big a deal as you think you are.

Concluding Thoughts

I asked some of my Facebook friends what they felt should be eliminated from the church. In addition to confirming the above points, I received several additional interesting suggestions:

Skinny jeans, pulpits, ministers pushing people over at the altar, new stage props every week, organs, tambourines, one-hour services, worship leaders influenced by secular music, the subordination of women, praying in tongues on the microphone, not praying in tongues on the microphone, quenching the Spirit, excessive manifestations, controlling manifestations and comedy acts from the platform.

Why am I suddenly envisioning a skinny-jean wearing, tambourine-playing woman telling jokes as she pushes people over at the altar? Oh well. Nobody is going to agree on all of this, as I stated at the beginning of the article, but I'd imagine we all want God to lead his church! What changes do you think would be appropriate? {*eo*}

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