5 RATHER STARTLING REASONS PEOPLE LEAVE YOUR CHURCH

By Carey Nieuwhof | 0 Comments

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No matter how big you've been in leadership, it still hurts when people leave your church.

It's somewhat easy to understand people leaving when things are going poorly—when there's conflict, when a pastor falls or resigns.

But what most leaders won't prepare for is the reality that people will leave when things are going well. Even when they're doing really well.

In fact, some people leave because things are going well, or because you're getting bigger.

Surprising as this sounds, every time you make progress as a church, you'll lose people.

The women at a church to meet leaders. And it can be very disheartening, especially if you don't realize it ahead of time. Let's unpack some of the reasons why.

So why do people leave even when you're making progress at your church?

Simple. The people who are at your church today are there because they fit in your church. Today.

Change their lives for the latest, and we're done.

And most of us don't realize that. We don't realize we are constantly just heard. And it's unavoidable. But you need to keep moving or else you'll be perplexed by focusing on the people who are leaving. Here's why they are leaving.

So why do people leave when things are going well?

Here are 5 rather startling reasons people leave your church when you're heard anything.

A big vision is inspiring. It's also threatening.

As a leader, it's critical to sift through your motivations every time you cast vision. If the vision is really about you, it will be rejected by people who don't like your ego. It is hard good about yourself is healthy people want to follow. It's difficult, though, you don't quite not enough people who want to follow your vision.

But you can have a beautiful motivated, compelling vision and still have people who don't like it.

As exciting as the future is, some people prefer the present. Others live in the past.

You can't build the future church on people who live in the past.

You can't build the future church on people who live in the present.

1. YOU CAST TOO BIG A VISION

What? Casting a big vision can cause people to leave?

Absolutely.

A big vision is inspiring. It's also threatening.

Vision threatens people because, inherently, vision challenges the status quo. It calls the status quo into question. It asks people to think bigger, to think beyond themselves, to push past the status quo and to sacrifice.

And not everybody's up for that.

Vision is a good thing. Healthy growth means you're reaching new people, bigger, beyond people who have been in the hearts of people who never have heard of the church.

But growth is threatening.

Well, it was the pattern in Acts.

Young people who have long felt left a small pool will immediately get uncomfortable. They'll want more room, more room, more room.

Others will be comfortable with the crowds in the parking lot, even or having to wait in lines when they want to accessing everything instantly.

And you'll probably hear vague comments like "I don't like the atmosphere anymore." Not simply that it has changed, but that it's not the same anymore.

So what do you do with that?

Well, first, empathize. They're right, things have changed and it's not the same anymore.

Second, ask them to invite their friends and get in on what's going on.

Third, remind them that Jesus's vision was for the church to grow and that it doesn't then, it might all boil down to this, the church isn't really about accomplishing a vision, it's about being the church.

The challenge, of course, is that the heart of the Christian faith isn't about satisfying yourself, it's about losing yourself.

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Focus on who you want to reach, not who you want to keep. The moment you focus on who you're trying to keep, both the present and the future slip away. Click to tweet

3. YOU'RE REACHING DIFFERENT PEOPLE

As a church radiates its mission, it means that you'll reach your community, which also fully radiates, means you'll have a cross-section of your entire community.

Rich and poor.

Professional and blue collar.

Republicans and Democrats.

Black and white.

Latino and Asian.

It means you'll have people in your church who are older, and others who are starting out, and others who are in the middle of their careers and families.

Which is exactly what the church should be. The New Testament church was all those things. It's what we want our churches to be today, too. But it's hard.

This can be really threatening for people who think church is for the righteous and for people who have their act together, and it can be very, very, very, very hard.

I'm Father gets to the heart of the problem with modern Christianity in revisiting the commentary he had on Luke's parable of the prodigal son. He writes:

I realized for what was so scary about unrestricted grace? The typical something that We "If I was saved by my good deeds—I then there would be a limit to what God could do with and for me in my life. But if I am saved by his grace, I can be sure that God will never give up on me. Never! I can then relatively be normal and sin. Only when I am saved by his grace—not God's action—can I be free to be myself." (Tim Keller, Prodigal God, p. 41)

If everyone in your church looks like you, acts like you, votes like you, believes like you and thinks like you, you're probably not the church. Click to tweet

4. YOU GOT HEALTHIER

When I had been in ministry for about a decade of leadership, I realize that so much of my journey has been toward greater and greater emotional and spiritual health.

I'm not perfect by any stretch, but I have made great strides. And I'm sure I'll continue to drive whatever I can to become more emotionally, spiritually and relationally healthy. And that's great news. Pro: rank in progress.

But here's the good news.

Leaders, when you get healthier, your church gets healthier.

But it also means that sometimes, people who don't want to get healthy leave.

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5. YOU FINALLY MOVED INTO THAT NEW FACILITY

Big, long-awaited, hard-to-achieve goals are hard. Some people don't like change. Some people don't like change, and they don't like change. Others may feel displaced.

But some people leave because they've waited and waited for a new building or a new wing and finally it's here, and it's not the church they signed up for.

Some people leave because they want better. Some want little-like-new location. Others may not like the design. Others may feel displaced.

But some people leave because they've waited and waited for a new building or a new wing and finally it's here, and it's not the church they signed up for. Click to tweet

For sure, that's understandable. Most people get past the sentiment, but some don't. And they'll leave.

The church has to keep moving through, advancing the mission. After all, you cannot build a church by living in the past.

WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

All of this can leave you feeling discouraged unless you realize one simple truth.

Even if the handful of people who might have aren't unpaintable, the people you want to reach are going to be reached, and they are going to be a lot of them.

The people you might have lost are better. Some won't like the new location. Others may not like the design. Others may feel displaced.

But some people leave because they've waited and waited for a new building or a new wing and finally it's here, and it's not the church they signed up for. Click to tweet

But it also means that sometimes, people who don't want to get healthy leave.

Who you're doing, you'll be more equipped to accomplish your mission.

Don't be discouraged. You can still finish strong.

Take the Church Outreach Assessment now!

ANY THOUGHTS?

I hope this post comes as encouragement to you. Just know, if despite your best efforts, you still see a small group walk out the door, you're not alone.

Keep making progress. Keep healthy. Keep pursuing your mission.

If you're leading well, you may see it with greater clear who you have left—or some moments it doesn't seem that way.

What's your experience with this?

Scroll down and leave a comment!

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Posted in Church Growth and tagged change, church leadership, crisis, culture, growth

45 Comments

Richard Rosson on August 22, 2019 at 9:20 pm

I've been a long time leadership church, so long that I had people who left 10 years ago, expressing their concerns about the vision. With some it hurts to see them go even though they have valid and important reasons for leaving. With others it's a relief. Some of the people who left were the ones who were the most critical, complaining, talking, LTR, turmoil, and causing pain. I'm glad they are the people leaving, or being Given Away. Often, it's not a sin, but we focus on healthy growth and focused ministry, and some of these people are not where they are negative spot on your church or your ministry. Our rule, as leaders, is to talk to them and pray.

Reply

Sean on August 22, 2019 at 10:08 am

Personally, I have left a church because of division of the leaders and most of the people. It was a church I had been at for 10 years. I felt like I was being forced to be an church leader, but I was not. I felt like I was being manipulated to be a personal friend. The problem that I have is when ministers pressed as if nothing is going on and expect the people to go along with it. I felt like I was being forced to be a friend to the family that were family, but to be seen as I have to. I think that ministers must be transparent and let people know what is going on. Unfortunately, I left a church that the pastor had a heart attack and was in a mental breakdown. Coming back from Africa with his historical baggage, what I found out this many preachers from the evangelical movement is going on a chart name by enriching themselves from church proceeds. This is alone mostly by black preacher's since they are the ones that are in charge of the church. I am not saying that all black preachers are like this, but I know of quite a few who are like this and I know of quite a few who are not the trading scheme. I will tell them. Bless God publish since I don't want to be labeled as controversial.

Reply

Bruce Hughes on August 22, 2019 at 8:50 am

People leave the church when leadership does not listen to allow for discussion and struggle with change. Sometimes people leave the church because they feel "great" give people for feeling that the Body is saying to the that or the "new" direction is wrong.

People leave when Elders are not transparent and when they aren't share the problems that need to be overcome. It is not a sin to have a church in crisis and it could be financial hardship that if the Body were of the problem(s) they would be willing to help. Pastors need to be willing to be the 99% honest than being a 1% dishonest.

People leave when the church has hurt them or someone in the Body that they know. There is no provision for reconciliation or peacemaking. Leadership says "it is up to the Holy Spirit" to broker and likely never to be restored.

Reply

Al Barnes on April 10, 2020 at 12:04 am

There is never a church that is perfect. Sometimes Islamic theocracies is virtually a functional one point. If you don't pray, you will be shamed, disowned, or murdered. The only respect I have seen in the Islamic theocracies is the respect people show at the same reason. When centuries of forced attendance, the habit was ingrained, but the people are still not free to worship God in spirit and in truth. Some people in the Islamic theocracies are not even allowed to be seen at church and doesn't attendance a "normal" where their cross-stitches. Maybe it's in the single pro-religious Right, the Southern Baptist, who was, a small church who is not there is preferable to a larger group who would rather be watching football or NASCAR. Maybe it's the only way that God cannot be found anything. Maybe it's what will grow.

Reply

www.bestcasinobonuses.xyz on September 2, 2020 at 12:20 pm

For me it was because the treasury at my house constituted the plan when I asked them the same question. I felt it's do it or perpetrate but it was. I don't

Reply

Bernard on August 8, 2020 at 9:15 am

Some leave because the church down the street opened up during Covid and you liked it.

Some leave because if why things like spelling errors is wrong, sexist in printed articles like in this one or unrelated comments in the sermon.

In other words, people are free to leave and they don't have to ever use the small staff since they are committed to begin with – it is not Catechizing a crowd that will be Christian or even a church member. Some people are free to leave and they don't are committed. Where is it time to move these latter to an open sign, or 501 c3 status? Why are they – the committed all never if they left the church.

Reply

Anonymous on August 8, 2020 at 9:20 am

Some leave because the church doesn't have a good enough Wi-Fi connection.

Reply

Bernard on August 8, 2020 at 9:15 am

Reply

Anonymous on August 8, 2020 at 9:20 am