

The 10 Most Common Fears Church Leaders Have

I have not hidden my love for pastors and other church leaders. I have said and written on many occasions that they often have a very difficult work. I recently told a large gathering of seminary students to consider seriously their calling, because no one should enter the ministry unless their calling is clear and secure.



Nor should any would-be pastor think that answering this call this calling is a bed of roses. As I converse with church leaders across the country and beyond, I often hear of their challenges and fears. Yet every Christian should know that God has commanded us not to fear. Still, in our humanity and sinfulness, lapsing into fear is common. I certainly did as a pastor. I even succumb to it sometimes today.

Common concerns

So what are the most common fears of church leaders? Here are the 10 I hear often, listed in my perceived order of frequency.

1. **Fear of critics.** Leading a church means the leader will have critics—sometimes so frequently that it seems easier not to lead. For pastors and other church leaders, the steady inflow of negativity can become emotionally, spiritually, and physically draining.
2. **Fear of failure.** Church leaders are not exempt from this almost universal fear. Leadership requires faith-based steps, or what the world calls “risk.” Some church leaders do not lead forward because they fear they will not succeed.
3. **Fear of power brokers.** These church members often are the informal but true decision makers. Some have great influence. Some are big financial supporters of the church. Some are both.

4. **Fear of failing to please.** All of us want to be loved; church leaders are no different. Yet this desire can develop into a people-pleasing attitude. When it does, a leader constantly confronts the reality that any decision or action is likely to displease someone.
5. **Fear of change.** Most of us have comfort zones. Some pastors and church staff are willing to move and lead out of their comfort zones. But some are not.
6. **Fear of nitpickers.** There is obvious overlap between this fear and fear of critics. The nitpickers often don't view themselves as critics; they offer suggestions about points of minutiae. For example, this group includes those who remind the pastor to make announcements of minor matters five minutes before a worship service begins.
7. **Fear of finances.** This fear takes at least two different forms. The first is a general fear of anything financial because the church leader is not well trained in this area. The second is a fear to take prudent steps of financial faith lest it harm the church's finances.
8. **Fear of others seeing weaknesses.** Pastors, in particular, are often expected to be omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. But the reality is that no pastor is good at everything. Some leaders are fearful that their weaknesses will be exposed to church members.
9. **Fear of offending others.** Those in vocational ministry often must take stands and speak truth that goes against the grain of culture; they may even offend church members. While all church leaders should speak truth with an irenic spirit, many do not do so because they don't want to hurt others' feelings.
10. **Fear of success.** A number of pastors have shared their fear of doing well in an area of ministry, but not having the ability to build on success. One example is the pastor who confessed he tries to keep his church small because he fears he doesn't have the skills to lead a larger one.

Leaning on God

So what is the purpose of this blog? Am I trying to shame pastors and other leaders for their lack of faith? Not really. I am offering it as a reminder and a challenge. We all are prone to different fears and insecurities at times. And, yes, our fear of these types of matters does reflect a lack of faith in God.

Perhaps more than anything else, I am encouraging church leaders to lean more upon the God who called us, the One who promised He would always be with us. Psalm 27 says: "The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom should I fear? The Lord is the

stronghold of my life—of whom should I be afraid?” (Psalm 27:1, HCSB). Let those words help calm your fears.

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