

Ten Warning Signs of Trouble for Churches

By Thom Rainer

Prior to my present place of ministry, I spent more than 20 years consulting with churches across the nation. I also had the opportunity to research churches, primarily in the United States. Over time I noticed certain patterns or signs that indicated a congregation might be headed for trouble.



After reviewing my consultation notes and research, I identified ten key warning signs for churches. If at least four of these signs were present, I let the leadership know that remedial efforts were necessary. If six or more signs were present, I expressed concern that the congregation faced serious difficulties.

The list

I have not listed the warning signs below in any particular order. Nor are they the result of a scientifically accurate study. Although this information is both experiential and anecdotal, I found it immensely helpful in diagnosing the health of a church.

Church leaders should be concerned . . .

- If the pastor does not have adequate time to be in the Word or if he chooses not to do so.
- If the members are spending time arguing about how money should be spent.
- If none or only a few of the key leaders are actively sharing their faith.
- If there is no clear process of discipleship in place, just a plethora of programs and activities.
- If corporate prayer is not a major emphasis in the church.
- If church members are arguing about worship style or worship times.
- If church members expect the paid staff to do most of the ministry, instead of the staff equipping the members to do the work of ministry ("Why didn't the pastor visit me in the hospital?")
- If there are ongoing disagreements about matters of the church facilities.
- If the church has more meetings than new disciples.
- If the leadership of the church does not have a coherent plan for what is taught in small groups and Sunday school classes.

The pattern

There is a common pattern for most of these warning signs: Church members are more concerned about their preferences and desires than other people. They are inwardly focused. They ask what the church can do for them, instead of asking how God can use them sacrificially and radically through the church's ministries.

True Christianity is a faith that always seeks to put others first. Sadly, in many churches across our land, members are more concerned about getting their own personal needs and preferences met.

What is your story?

Source: www.thomrainer.com