

Leadership Matters, but So Does Preaching

God uses pastors in many different ways. He uses them to cast vision. He works through pastors to set the tone in churches and to be examples for others to follow. Unfortunately some churches won't follow good leaders no matter what. They would rather die than change. And they usually get the former for forsaking the latter.

Still, leadership matters. Leadership is critical. And the most visible aspect of leadership for the pastor takes place in the pulpit. For better or worse, the people in the church are watching and listening. Most of them do not expect the pastor to have the oratory skills of a well-known pastor. They do not expect him to have the exegetical insights of some of the most brilliant preachers in the land.

But they do have expectations.

They expect pastors to be prepared in the pulpit. They know, for the most part, who's winging it and who has prepared. They expect the pastor to teach them about God's Word. In many ways the preaching event is sacred. The people want to hear from God and His Word. They expect the pastor to open the Bible and teach them what God says.

And they expect him to make the Bible relevant to their lives. While they may be fascinated by some esoteric doctrine, they ultimately want to know how God would have them apply His truths to their lives.

One of the most common complaints I hear about the beleaguered pastors from church members is, "I'm just not getting fed." Now I realize that some of those complaints are self-centered. I also realize that some people will complain about everything and anything. And some people would find fault if the apostle Paul himself were preaching.

But the comment is telling.

"I'm just not getting fed." That means they are hungry. They are hungry for God's Word for their lives today.

That's what I've seen in my research of the dechurched. They were hungry, and they were not being fed. Sure, they could have and should have found a church where they could be fed, but the reality is that they are dropouts. And it is clear how important the role of the pastor is in stemming the tide of church dropouts.

In the research for *Essential Church*, we found one out of every seven dropouts said the sermons did not capture their attention, and about the same number say that the church was not helping them to develop spiritually. Of the dropouts 8 percent stated bluntly that the pastor was not a good preacher and 7 percent said that the sermons were not relevant to their lives.

Taken individually, none of the responses was overwhelming; but taken in the aggregate, they

are saying something powerfully. **Preaching matters.** The content of the sermons matters. And the life application of the sermons matters.

Any church or pastor who does not take seriously the role of preaching in his church is missing it. Just look at the dropouts as at least part of the evidence.

Adapted from [Essential Church](#) (B&H Publishing Group, 2008).

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