

Rookie Pastors: Know What You Don't Know, and Grow From There

In the first few years of leading in a new Senior Pastor role, **it's not the answers you don't have that will set you back.**

What promises to halt progress, and likely even cause you to second-guess your calling, are the questions that stem from the signals you missed during the courtship and hiring process.

Here are 11 warning signs of church dysfunction that new pastors might miss when interviewing...

...Sunday School leadership that spends more time decorating their classrooms than preparing their lessons

...the "Hall of Former Pastor Portraits" is carefully arranged so as to have plenty of room for many more

...the church's website has a copy of the bylaws readily accessible in less than 3 clicks

...teal sanctuary carpet from the late 1980s that, in the name of stewardship, just keeps getting "steam cleaned" with a grocery store rental instead of replaced

...the youth minister prides his or herself in running off all but 10-12 kids because the others just weren't serious enough about "going deep in their faith"

...spouses are encouraged to attend conferences with the Pastor because you will be using vacation days

...everyone who has been, currently is, or might one day like to be serve in a volunteer role has a copy of the master key

...each "visitor parking" place is full starting with the 8:00 am service, every week, rain or shine

...there are more puppets in the children's ministry office than there are books

...the pastor is invited to deacon, elder or governing board meetings, "as needed"

...during the interview process, you are always snuck into the church through a back door

While these are extreme examples, each of these signs maintain a firm footing in a reality from which every leader can relate.

Many new pastors let their natural optimism and confidence overshadow the **organizationally obvious** during a season of transition. Hope for what *could and should be* shades the reality of

what actually is. Then, during the subsequent honeymoon season, these rookie leaders, well intentioned and operating from search team assurances, tend to run headlong into a large cultural roadblock that overwhelms their abilities and undermines their leadership.

A new pastor does not need to **just** learn where the cultural sacred cows of the past are grazing.

They need to also be a **positive part of making the necessary adjustments for a healthy and productive future**. Active participation in a season of uncovering identity and direction for the church, as in the [Auxano Vision Framing Process](#) could be a **new pastor's best practice**.

Ultimately, success for rookie pastors does not come from **knowing everything about your new assignment**... it does begin with **knowing what you don't know, and growing from there**.