
Three Common Mistakes Pastors Make

I was honored to discuss leadership on a panel at the Southern Baptist Pastors Conference with Greg Matte, Rodney Woo, and Jack Graham. People submitted questions beforehand, and one of the questions that Pastor Greg sent my way was “*What are the most common mistakes pastors make?*” Here are three:

1. NOT OFFERING CLARITY

Marcus Buckingham said, “Clarity is the preoccupation of the effective leader. If you do nothing else as a leader, be clear.” **Wise church leaders clarify, guard, and preach the essentials over and over again.**

Most importantly, pastors must be **clear on the theology** that serves as the foundation for the church. Without theological clarity, churches will drift from the faith that was delivered once and for all to the saints (Jude 3). Without continually reminding people of the gospel, a church will no longer stand on the strong foundation of the faith (1 Corinthians 15:1-2). Or as D. A. Carson has stated, “To assume the gospel in one generation is to lose it in the next.”

Pastors must also be **continually clear on the ministry philosophy and direction of the church**. People long to have a direction painted for them, to see how all that the church does is built on the theology and philosophy of ministry that drives the church. Pastors who fail to offer directional clarity leave a massive vacuum of leadership. Consequently, others will step in with competing visions of what the church should be and do, and the church will move in a plethora of directions, unsure of who she really is.

2. UNDERESTIMATING THE POWER OF CULTURE

By culture, I am not referring to the ethnic or socio-economic mix in the church (though this is important too). I am referring to the **shared values and beliefs that undergird all the church does**. Peter Drucker is credited for famously saying, “Culture eats strategy for breakfast.” He was not diminishing the importance of a wise strategy, but he was stating the overpowering strength of culture on an organization.

If a church leader attempts to implement a strategy without first addressing the culture, if the two are in conflict with one another, the strategy is doomed before it even launches. Culture will win. And while the doctrinal confession in a church is absolutely critical, if the culture is in conflict with the confession, the culture will trump the confession.

For example... A church has the doctrinal confession that all believers are priests and ministers because Jesus’ sacrificial death for us tore the veil of separation and His Spirit has empowered all believers. But that same church has a long-standing culture that the “real ministers” are the professional clergy—that whenever a need arises, it lands on a staff member’s plate. Thus, when a tragedy occurs or someone needs counseling, it is the culture that drives the behavior, not the doctrinal confession.

Wise church leaders will continually check the culture and, by God's grace, seek to bring it into deep alignment with the theology and ministry philosophy of the church.

3. SWITCHING STRATEGIES TOO FREQUENTLY

Many churches never realize the full potential of their plans or strategies because they switch them too frequently. They abandon their direction for a new direction and confuse the people as to where the church is really headed. **Switching strategies too frequently is really a symptom of not possessing or providing clarity** and not having a culture that is deeply connected to the theology and philosophy of the church. Continually switching strategies will harm the overall effectiveness of the pastor's leadership.

Read more from Eric [here](#).