



Greater Sydney SDA Conference

5 Ministry Killers and How To Defeat Them

Charles Stone
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“Minefields that litter ministry threaten to distract us from focusing on what’s nearest to God’s heart. Although every pastor faces unique challenges, research plainly reveals five significant and common ‘ministry killers’.

They are:

1. Head-in-the sand mentality

A surprising percentage of pastors indicated they serve in churches without problems (or are unaware of any).

2. Misdirected emotional investment

Many pastors pace much of their emotional capital into issues upon which Scripture does not place highest value.

3. Unhealthy responses to ministry killers

What we do and what we don’t do. Numerous pastors respond to ministry problems unproductively and even destructively. Pastors generally keep their frustrations to themselves, which causes them to seldom ask others for helpful changes.

4. An attitude that ‘God and I can handle this’.

A large percentage of pastors attempt to handle ministry stress in solitude. As a result, they don’t invite into their lives sage people who could help them understand and appropriately deal with their issues.

5. Lonely, hurting spouses

Shockingly, pastors seldom mentioned this issue.

Think about the challenges pastors often face when it comes to their relationship with people who attend the church. For you, what are the types of issues that cause the most disappointment or frustration between you and the people in your church?

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The Barna Group Research Survey⁴

Category	Percentage
Lack of commitment in general	19%
Lack of commitment to grow spiritually/walk as Christians	15%
Congregants' lifestyle and morality struggles	13%
Lack of commitment to serve in ministry	10%
No problems	10%
Lack of commitment in church attendance	8%
Problems with communication	8%
Relationships/problems between congregants	7%
Unrealistic expectations	7%
Financial gaps and concerns	6%

LifeWay Research Survey⁵

Category	Percentage
Lack of commitment and follow-through	16%
Good situation, no problems	10%
Lack of faithfulness, inconsistent Christian living	7%
Communication, misunderstandings	6%
Don't know, not sure, not specific	5%
Lack of involvement, reluctance to participate	5%
Resistance to change, narrow-minded	4%
Absenteeism, sporadic attendance	4%
Financial issues, budget, stewardship	4%
Lack of time, busyness, schedule overload	3%

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Mega-Theme	Super-Category Summary	Percentage
Issues involving people's response to my leadership and their response to the church's organizational needs	Issues related to the CHURCH	60%
Issues involving people's commitment to their walk with Jesus	Issues related to CHRIST	30%
Issues involving people's relationships with others in the church	Issues related to COMMUNITY	15%

Burn Out

I don't think pastors 'burn out' because they work too hard. People who work hard often do so because they're good at what they're doing and they enjoy doing it. I think burnout comes from working with no relational gratification.
Eugene H. Peterson

Responding to Issues:

- The Sloth: Stay Detached
- The Skunk: Leave the Mess to Others
- The Hawk: Look Through a Window, Not in a Mirror
- The Turtle: Hide Behind Spirituality
- The Lion: I'm Quite Comfortable in My Own Skin

What's needed: Healthy Balance Between Lion and Turtle.

Dealing with Relational Anorexia:

- Do you tend to only be a giver in most of your relationships?
- Do others usually approach you only when they want something from you rather than to simply spend time with you?
- Do you find it difficult to open up to others?
- Do you most often choose to be alone to deal with your problems?
- Do you feel that only God really knows and loves you?
- Are intimate, two-way conversations with others rare?

Possibilities for Change:

- Do something totally different from ministry
- Be okay with taking care of you
- Lighten up and laugh more often
- Build relationships with people for no 'ministry' purpose
- Take care of your body
- Master technology – don't let it master you
- Periodically take a solo retreat
- Don't Try to Insulate Yourself From Pain
- Learn to Absorb Punches with Grace
- Slow Your Pace of Ministry
- Learn to Be Okay When Things Don't Go Your Way
- Make Spiritual Receptivity the Biggest Thing in Your Life
- Remember That Ultimately we Serve the People; They Don't Serve Us.
- Leave the Results to God
- Intensify Personal Relationships