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**When is it time to leave a church?**

***Maybe we are turning into negative people!***

We certainly hope not. Not one of the three of us is eating sour grapes or taking grouch pills. But the question and the implied dilemma are real.

There are times when a pastor who really uses good common sense and waits on the Lord should leave his assignment at one church and go to another. But how do you know when that alarm is going off?

Two of us, Jim and I, will try to answer that. See if you agree, or what goals it prompts. But Jeff, who goes first, will answer from the viewpoint of the person in the pew or on staff. When is it appropriate for that person to exit?

Next month we will try to get back to our usual positive selves.

By the way, between us we have served about 120 years in four pastorates and 12 years coaching pastors. That, we realize, does not make us right, but it does say we are not just thinking theories!

*Hoping to help,*

*Knute, with Jeff and Jim*

***When is it time to leave a church?***

***Jeff Bogue***

* It’s time to leave a church when there is false teaching, when there’s abusive leadership, when your kids have no connection to the church, maybe when the church is visionless, or when an incomplete gospel is being taught.

***Jim Brown***

* It is time to leave when your voice is no longer heard. In other words when your people no longer value the input you have regarding the direction and vision of the church!
* When your passion is dry and your “get up and go” has left the building.
* If you aren’t in tune with the Holy Spirit, the dryness will probably be there before you think it is.
* When those closest to you, especially your wife, suggest that your work may have run its course.

***Why do such thoughts come?***

***Jeff Bogue***

* Sometimes for very good reasons… maybe what they’re reading or hearing is very accurate. But a lot of times people think they need to leave the church simply because they’re disconnected, or they have a lack of ownership.
* Sometimes it’s because they form bad habits, and then other times it’s visionlessness… they don’t really know why.

***Jim Brown***

* Often a tough season of conflict, weariness, and discouragement can bring on a desire to move on.
* We must understand that there is great opposition from the enemy who longs to stall the church and make it ineffective—so he will plant thoughts in our minds to step away.
* Offers come from other churches, and it seems like it could be better to move on.
* They surface when it feels like the vision has stalled and people are not on board to accomplish the mission.
* Yet, there may be a moment when it is time, and the Spirit of God confirms it in your heart.

***Knute Larson***

* Could be after rapid or negative changes happening at church—and ones that the pastor did not initiate. Even the best of us want to be leading and shepherding, not dictating.
* Because even you as a pastor do not feel good about inviting neighbors or friends to try the church. When that is true you know something is wrong.
* Because you feel the need to protect your family from the church! And that can happen.
* Such feelings could come when you are not effective as a leader or sometimes even as the shepherd-pastor or the church. Could be a local “tribal chief” really is both.
* Because some of the leaders obviously want you to leave!

***Why is it so hard to do, today especially?***

***Jeff Bogue***

* I’m not sure it is hard to do, unfortunately. I think people do it a lot, but it should be hard.
* If you’re going to leave a church, it should be done well, it should be done directly, it should be processed, and we as pastors need to realize we can’t stop it.

***Jim Brown***

* The age of your children and season of life can make the transition more difficult.
* As one ages it can become increasingly challenging.
* Often fear of the unknown keeps one from moving on to the next place.

***Knute Larson***

* Friends, neighbors, routines, love for the people of the church, love for the community. And, hopefully, most are leaving the trust of the people, and a proven reliability.
* Pastors feel especially loyal to a church they take into their hearts to pastor and lead. You can feel like you are deserting them. (Seems like this is a good thing.)

When I left the first church I pastored for 15 years, I lost 20 pounds and fought depression the year of decision-making. I think if I were a psychologist I would connect it to watching my parents divorce when I was in third grade. I felt like I was divorcing the church.

* It should be hard, usually. Some pastors switch too easily. You know, “Greener pastures…”
* It is hard today because there are not many jobs available, to put it in a cold way. There was a day when if you resigned on Sunday you heard from some “empty” churches by the next Sunday! Not anymore.

***Do some churches ask for this or deserve it?***

***Jeff Bogue***

* Yes, they do. In some churches, there is false teaching, there’s non-gospel agendas, there’s abusive leadership, there’s a weak gospel, and there’s a lack of vision; but you should still only leave once you’ve processed all this and sought to help with, and be a part of, the solution.

***Jim Brown***

* I often share with pastors looking to go into ministry, to remember the questions that were asked by the search team. They will give you insight to what they want you to do when you get there.
* Yes, in many situations poor leadership or controlling leadership will destroy the trust between the people and the pastor and lead to a pastoral change.
* Truth be told, if the mission of the gospel has been stalled for years, then it is time for a pastoral change so that the church can be effective again.
* Sin will certainly cause disruption and destroy the work of the gospel.

***Knute Larson***

* I prefer not to answer this question. 😊 But, yes, there are some churches that “chew up” pastor after pastor through the years, and spit them on to the next church. And the same people, sometimes, stay in control of “their church,” much to our disappointment, and God’s, I think.
* If a church or at least its leaders do not want to grow and to reach more people for Christ, but just to exist, that stubbornness can cause outsiders at least to believe they deserve the departure of the pastor. And probably some of the dedicated people.
* To be fair, it must be said that some pastors deserve that change, a forced change made by the church leaders and affirmed by the people, because they do not serve with the heart of Christ or stay with their doctrinal or ethical commitments.

*Pastorpedia is a resource provided to you by Momentum Ministry Partners. Please contact us at* [*info@buildmomentum.org*](mailto:info@buildmomentum.org) *or 574.267.6622 if we may be of any help to you or your ministry!*

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