

False Statements about Pastors

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A false statement can be based on not knowing the truth. But repeating a statement one knows is false, that's a lie. And there are lots of lies about pastors and other church workers.

These lies disrespect the office of the ministry, they hurt the pastor and his family, they hurt the church and the community, and they hurt the person who tells the lie. And almost always, they are undeserved.

There certainly are some bad pastors out there; however, it's ridiculous to assume an entire family line is bad because one or a few family members brought shame to themselves. It is absurd to state that an entire race or ethnic group is bad because of a few bad exceptions.

And it is totally wrong to make categorically false statements about pastors because you know a few negative examples or have had a bad experience with a pastor—or even more than one.

Often, not always, exposing a sin helps to end it. So here we go.

Untruth #1: “It’s always the pastor’s fault if his church is not growing.”

Let's get rid of this one right away. As with all of these, it may be this is true, but it's usually not. There are so many factors that go into this, and the first one is that it's only the Holy Spirit through the Word and Sacraments who makes the church grow where and when he wills.

The list of other factors is too long to print here, but while it can be the pastor's fault, it probably isn't. The flip side of this, “It's because of the pastor when a church is growing,” is also untrue.

Untruth #2: “Pastors only work a few hours a week.”

Yes, there are some church members who really believe a pastor works about 15 hours a week—and there are a few pastors who do, and shame on them.

I encourage anyone to look at the lives of pastors. Look at how pastors are on 24/7 call. See the pastor called back from vacation to do a funeral. Wake up with the pastor who was at the hospital all night with a family whose child was in an auto accident. See how long it takes to prepare a good sermon. Look at the total expectations of pastors by church members.

Untruth #3 “Pastors are in it for the money.”

Oh, c'mon. Have you truly seen the financial struggles of most pastors? Have you ever seen a pastor purchase a car, only to be castigated by a church member who decides the pastor must be making too much? Most pastors could make a lot more money in another profession with a lot less stress.

Untruth #4: “Pastors of large churches don't care about the members.”

The assumption is that large is bad and unloving. Here is the reality: a church of over 150 in attendance is a large church compared to most of the 350,000 churches in America. And even the pastor of a church of 150 cannot give ongoing personal attention to every member.

Most large church pastors do really love their flock, and they see to it that all members receive the care they need, even if they do this by delegating others to provide some of that care.

Untruths #5 and #6: “Pastors who care about doctrine don't care about mission” and “Pastors who care about mission don't care about doctrine.”

Again, there are exceptions, but most pastors really and truly do care about both. If this gets out of balance in the congregation, then the one needing more attention should get more attention until the balance is regained.

Untruth # 7: “Pastors are dictators, lording it over the flock.”

Whether in large churches or small, you'll find a few of these, but “few” again is the key word. Most pastors are servant leaders. Don't assume they are dictators just because they demonstrate leadership and work hard for what is right—often at great expense to themselves.

Untruth #8: “Pastors only care about ‘nickels and noses.’”

Don't you want your pastor to know and care about how many sheep are present? Don't you want your pastor to know the stewardship realities of the church and what God's Word teaches about that? But that doesn't mean your pastor cares about numbers more than people.



Critics often make concern about people the opposite of numerical awareness. They are not mutually exclusive. And most pastors love the Lord, their families, and their church members before they ever think about the statistics.

No pastor is perfect. And there are a few pastors who do indeed bring shame to their office. Almost everyone knows such an example. But the great majority of pastors are dedicated, hard-working, and servant-minded.

So when we critique a pastor, think about this: How would the Apostle Paul's resume look? Persecutor of the church; legalist; multiple arrests.

Then look at our Lord Jesus: Came from a nowhere town in an occupied country; common laborer; no wife or kids; gained a great following and lost it all; convicted of a capital crime and then executed in great shame; buried in a borrowed grave.

But then we look at the rest of the story through God's eyes: Jesus died and rose again for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

Because we have forgiveness of sins and new and eternal life in Jesus, and because he is the TRUTH, we seek his grace to defend and speak well of our pastor and put the best construction on everything.

This article is based on an article I read online at thomrainer.com. Some parts of it are direct quotes.