
EVER-PRESENT THREATS IN MINISTRY

by Daniel A. Brown, PhD

This is a short article taken from one of “Daniel’s Travel Journal” entries he made while traveling, sharing relationship and ministry with friends and churches in various parts of our country and overseas.

As silly as that sounds, it’s not actually farfetched for pastors to wonder if their church is worth the effort, if it will survive another four months, if it is all just a fanciful idea the pastor should never have pursued with his or her life.

People attending church—from those who come every week, to those who merely drift in and out—see church as an option for where to go. To them, a church is substantial. It’s there and waiting for people like them to show up. Who imagines that they will go to church and find it closed or moved? But for the pastors/leaders, who invest so much emotional and physical energy to make church happen, failure, closure and collapse are ever-present threats lurking just around the month, just weeks ahead in the declining offering count.

Even if the church doesn’t collapse or shrink away like a dried leaf tossed from a tree limb, pastors have tons of pressure to grow their congregations to sizeable numbers. Despite the factual reality that half of the Foursquare churches in the U.S. average less than 60 people (that includes children) in attendance, most pastors feel like they have failed if their churches don’t grow bigger than the average—a statistical impossibility for “most” churches to be “larger than the average.”

Pastors are tormented with self-doubt and deep soul-searching: “*What am I doing wrong?*” “*Why doesn’t my church grow?*” “*Why don’t people volunteer to help more?*” “*Should I quit this and just go attend another church?*” “*God, if You called me to do this, why am I so unfruitful?*” It takes so much courage for pastors just to make it through a week...

I recently told a group of leaders in Wroclaw, Poland that nothing in my life has caused me more pain and sorrow than pastoring. But, nothing except my family has given me more joyful satisfaction. If I suddenly became young, I would do it all over again—even knowing about eventual betrayal and the suffering that would come from people’s merciless invectives. Even though it often made me sad, *I loved every moment of pastoring people.*