

PASTORPEDIA™

Cutting Edge Conversations for Pastors and Church Leaders

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When is strong leadership abusive?

“And you must never talk to anyone about...”

Probably somewhere around the time that was said by the pastor-leader, abusive leadership was happening. Abusive leadership usually demands “a cone of silence,” or a non-disclosure agreement, or whispers.

And it seems to be a rapidly growing disease in church leadership.

No one ever got this bug from Jesus, the best of all leaders. He was, in fact, “gentle and humble in heart,” to use his own words. Our obeying and following him brings “rest for your souls,” he said. “For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:29, 30).

Leaders with a goal to be a big deal walk some other way, not with our Lord. And someone must tag them out.

And if you are headed that way—none of us should put it past ourselves!—please return to love. And to Jesus.

With grace,

Knute, Jeff, Jim

When is strong leadership abusive?

Jeff Bogue

- When it's self-serving, arrogant, controlling, and when it refuses good counsel.

Jim Brown

- When you use people to accomplish your mission!
- When we treat people like objects instead of loving human beings.
- When there is no accountability for the leaders.
- When the cause of Jesus gets trumped by one's own agendas.

Knute Larson

- When people around the leader are being hurt, losing heart because of the mood, or being taken advantage of. When the leader puts accomplishment ahead of the fruit of the Spirit.
- When the leader has personal goals ahead of the church goals.
- When he or she will not listen to cautions and warnings from others.

Can we love and lead at the same time?

Jeff Bogue

- Absolutely. We usually need to do both, so take time for the conversations and the communications, and give clear paths and reasons for the directions you're going.

Jim Brown

- Yes, you can; love still makes strong decisions.
- Love enough to tell the truth, while leading your people.

Knute Larson

- Yes. Jesus did—the one who washed feet! And we are called to follow him.
- No question, the best of leaders are also known for their love and care for those around them and on their team. They do not put goals ahead of kindness and gentleness but make unity and mood of the team just as important as the vision, or rather part of it!
- We must, if we are to be obeying our Lord. We must give as much attention to our spirits as we do to our ministries.

How does a loving leader turn mean?

Jeff Bogue

- Fatigue.
- Sometimes the leader is abused by people and so he gets defensive like a wounded animal.
- Arrogance, burnout, insecurity.

Jim Brown

- The heart is the root cause of all problems. Time spent with Jesus and the daily promptings of the Holy Spirit will keep us tender and humble. If our personal walk with Jesus is troubled, then we are in trouble.
- They let criticism eat away at their hearts instead of handing it off to God.
- A high view of self and a low view of others, creates selfish, mean leaders.
- A leader must find ways to refuel, refresh, and renew because if these systems are not in place, burnout will lead to mean, short leaders.

Knute Larson

- Read Psalm 36:1-4. The heart is deceitful and can somehow rationalize most anything.
- He gets a big head rather than a big heart by having “yes-people” around him and throwing out any warning signals he hears. He usually has no oversight board or accountability partners who warn him and lovingly rebuke him. In an ugly sense, he walks alone, maybe taking big steps but also hurting people going with him, or trying.
- He believes his own press releases. Or he writes them himself in large letters.
- A pastor or spiritual leader often receives heartfelt compliments and personal encouragement. If he takes these to heart rather than giving them to his Lord, they pile up and make him proud and uncaring about how he affects others. Even though he or she has taught that we must care for our own hearts and godliness first, he cares only for how people feel about him or how his ministry is acclaimed.
- We must always remember that as fallen people, meanness is not far away from any of us. By sheer selfishness and lust for power, we can put personal or church goals before our Savior and love for people.
- Often at the beginning the leader loses a battle or two, and grows inward rather than upward and outward. Determination to succeed starts to come before dedication to our Lord and his ways of love and wisdom.

How can those around him help?

Jeff Bogue

- Support and defend.
- Give rest, pray, be reassuring, stand shoulder to shoulder.

Jim Brown

- He must create venues to be able to hear from others about his leadership.
- Accountability systems must be in place to thwart this kind of behavior.
- Make sure rest, vacations, and sabbaticals are part of the normal calendar.

Knute Larson

- By being sure in the church that there is a good board of oversight that has responsibilities for mood and people relationships, as well as church goals and biblical principles. (See the notes on “the soccer field model” for the church board.)
- By speaking up one on one first with the offending party, and then, if not heard, getting two or three witnesses to help. The bigger picture for the glory of the Lord is more important than the possible loss of a friend or leader.

Some sad stories read like no one confronted the meanness.

- By not agreeing to a “cone of silence” or a shield meant to protect selfish leadership.

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

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