

The Church's Dirty Little Secret

By [Joe McKeever](#) December 1, 2015

“Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there” (Ephesians 4:14).

“Church is the only place on earth where people can throw hissy fits and get away with it.” —A friend serving his first church after seminary

I told my minister friend I was sorry he had to learn this little dirty secret about church life.

I asked for his story. He had two.

A church member attending his class said she could not find her workbook. The pastor told her he had borrowed it for another class, and she was welcome to use his. She said, “Okay. I’ll go home then.”

And she stalked out.

The minister said, “Would she have done that at work? At the doctor’s office? I think not.”

But she had no problem with putting her immaturity on full display at church.

On another day, a man stormed out of a church leadership meeting because his idea for a fundraiser had been rejected.

My friend said, “Would he have done that in a college class? At work? At home? At the store, even?”

He would not have. And this guy was a church leader!

The church—which is the institution which we Christians should respect most—ends up being the least respected by many. And the pastor the least respected professional.

My friend said, “Situations like these used to keep me up at night. By God’s grace, they don’t any more.”

I’m sad he had to learn this reality about church life; I’m glad he’s sleeping at night.

A couple of random comments come to mind.

—The only way Noah could stand the stink inside the ark was the storm outside.

—That the church still exists, with all its human flaws, is proof aplenty of the grace and mercy of God.

Immature believers abound and that’s all right. Babies must go through all the stages of development before they achieve maturity. But we should never put an infant in a place of leadership. Leaders must be adults in the faith if they are to be role models and examples to those coming after.

The leader who storms out of a meeting because he/she did not get their way has just done the church a favor. He/she has identified themselves as unqualified to lead, as surely as if they had hung a sign around their neck.

We are better off without such people representing God's church and making critical decisions. (On the other hand, if that one comes back and apologizes before the entire group, that is a sign of a growing maturity and they should be given every encouragement.)

Here are seven "wrong ideas" the spiritually immature—those given to "hissy fits," as my friend put it—have about the Lord's work ...

1) They see the church as a human institution belonging to them.

"We can do anything we want to. It's our church. My daddy helped start this church." Or paid for that pew. Or build that shed.

They do not see the church as holy and belonging to Christ (Matthew 16:18).

They are in for a rude awakening when they appear before Jesus some day.

2) They see the pastors as their employees, there to do their bidding and accountable to them.

"We hired him; we can fire him." "If we are unhappy with him, then he has lost his effectiveness and needs to be replaced."

They do not believe that God sends pastors to churches and installs them as the overseers of His flock (Acts 20:28 and I Peter 5:2).

They are in for a rude awakening when they stand before Jesus some day.

3) They see God's work as something the professionals do and their roles as volunteers when it's convenient and easy.

"We hired him to increase the attendance." "It's his job to visit the sick and reach the lost; that's why we pay him."

They do not see that the command to be light and salt, to take the gospel to the ends of the earth, was given to the entire church, not just the apostles.

They are in for a rude awakening when they stand before Jesus some day.

4) They see their contributions (money, service, teaching, etc.) as voluntary and not required.

"If I give my money, I expect it to be done the way I want it to." "I'm not giving my money there any more; I don't like what the pastor is doing."

They do not see themselves as under Heaven's mandate and fully accountable to the living God.

They are in for a rude awakening when they stand before Jesus one day.

5) They see their church's reputation in the community as irrelevant and unity as beside the point.

"We're Baptists. Where you find two, you'll have three opinions." "I've been here the longest; I deserve to be heard." "If the community sees our church as divisive, that's their problem and they don't have to come."

They do not get John 17:21 where our Lord prayed for unity among His people “that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me.” When the church is divided, the community wants none of what it has to offer, and the Kingdom of God suffers.

Such people are in for a rude awakening when they stand before Jesus one day.

6) They see their childish behavior as no one’s business but their own.

“I’m not responsible for what others think of me.” “If people make decisions about Jesus based on how I act, well that’s just their problem.” “God knows my heart.”

They do not get Matthew 5:16 where Jesus commanded us to let our light so shine before men that they might see our good works and glorify our Father who is in Heaven. A great deal depends on my faithfulness.

They are in for a rude awakening when they stand before Jesus one day.

7) They see themselves as the center of their own universe and think everything revolves around them.

“God wants me happy. I heard a television preacher say that and I believe it.” “If I’m not getting anything out of the sermon, it’s the preacher’s fault.”

They do not see that Jesus Christ is the center of everything, and that worship is a matter of “giving to Him the glory due His name.” By worshiping Him rightly, they will get a lot from a service; however, if they go into the service to “get something,” they will receive nothing from it. It’s a matter of focus.

Count this as a call for maturity in leadership and discipleship of the membership.

Pastors should preach constantly that the commands of the New Testament were given to the full church and not just the disciples, and that we shall all stand before the Lord and give account of our faithfulness some day.

They asked a well-known preacher of a past generation, “What is the most important thing we need to get across to the people of God today?” He answered immediately: “Our accountability to God.”

“Why do you look down on your brother? For we shall all stand before God’s judgement seat. It is written ‘As surely as I live,’ says the Lord, ‘every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.’ So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God” (Romans 14:10-12).

From time to time, if we stay in the Lord’s church long enough, each one of us will receive a disappointment from not getting something we had our heart set on. We will be denied some program or event or facility that was dear to us. Nothing tells the story about our maturity like the way we handle our disappointment.

Let us grow up into maturity. Let us be strong in the Lord and thus be able to help others coming behind us.