

## Recommended Reading from the Pastor

### Church Members, Here Are 10 Ways to KILL Your Church

By [Tejado Hanchell](#) -

I have the awesome privilege of serving a church that has been around for over 80 years. In those 80 years, the church has only had four senior pastors. While our congregation has had its share of struggles over the years, we are pleased that we have survived!

Considering the staggering statistics on [church mortality](#) in America, we are grateful to God for still standing strong. Some researchers suggest that between 3,500-4,500 churches close their doors (or die) each year. That means that in the time since our congregation was founded over 80 years ago, over 300,000 churches have died!

I suspect that most church “deaths” occur for a few simple (and oftentimes avoidable) reasons.

Recently, one of the senior members of our congregation—who has been there for all 80 plus years—handed me a church newsletter that was written in 1959. As I delicately flipped through the tattered pages of this precious document, one article in the newsletter pricked my attention. The title, which I have borrowed for this blog post, was simply “10 Ways to Kill a Church.”

The thing that interested me the most is how this list of “church killers” written in 1959 looks so much like the usual suspects in many church deaths today.

Here is my slightly paraphrased version of the 1959 list of “10 Ways to Kill a Church”:

1. Don't come.

One of the biggest church killers is [waning attendance](#). Many people simply can't find the time to spend an hour or two in the Lord's house. We find excuse after excuse as to why we can't come to church.

I wonder what our lives would look like if God only showed up at our house as often as we showed up at His. The Bible is clear about the importance of assembling or coming together ([Hebrews 10:25](#)).

I believe in the importance of going to church, which is why I do a weekly Twitter hashtag called #Go2Church. If we don't go to church, we just might be playing a part in killing the church.

2. If you do come, make sure it's late.

So many of today's worshipers (and apparently those of 1959) have a lackadaisical attitude toward worship. We have an "I'll get there when I get there" attitude when it comes to church attendance.

I wonder, however, if we showed up to our job the way we show up to our church...how many of us would still be employed?

We say that God is an "on time" God, but can He say the same about us? A lack of punctuality when it comes to worship is a microcosm of our overall view of God. It says that whatever else we are doing is more important, and God can just wait until we get there. This type of attitude is a major church killer.

3. Only show up when the weather is good.

Ever been to church in a driving rainstorm? Neither have most of the other people in your church! Some people only go to church when the sun is out and there are no clouds in the sky.

We have produced a culture of "fair-weather" Christians, who only attend church when everything is going right in their lives. The moment a storm hits their life, they get mad at God, the pastor and the church.

There are some people who you can tell exactly what's going on in their lives based upon their church attendance. When things are great and they have a little money in their pockets, they're on the front row singing "Amazing Grace," but as soon as they get laid off or deal with some sort of difficulty, they're ready to "curse God and die" ([Job 2:9](#)). The only thing that dies with that kind of attitude is the church.

4. Find fault with everything (and/or everyone).

Most homicide investigations begin by researching those who had something negative to say about the victim. Similarly, when a church dies, you can be sure that [the fault finders are prime suspects](#). These are the folks who sit "in the seat of the scornful" ([Psalm 1:1](#)).

Fault finders can always SPOT a problem, but they never SOLVE a problem. They are definitely church killers.

5. Never accept a leadership role or responsibility.

Many people have a "renters" mentality when it comes to church; they take no ownership.

When you rent an apartment, if something breaks, you call the landlord to fix it. Since you don't own it, you have no obligation to fix it. There are too many people renting pews (and some pulpits).

It's far easier to criticize than to mobilize. As Seth Godin says, "No one has ever built a statue to a critic." If we want to make a difference, we have to accept the responsibility to lead—whether formally or informally.

Leadership is not about position; it's about productivity. A congregation full of followers is on life support and is getting ready to die.

6. Get mad if you're not appointed to a leadership position.

So many people in church are focused on titles. They want to be directors, deacons and dignitaries, and when they are not appointed to a position, they begin to stir up trouble.

This is a manifestation of deep-seated pride, and pride is one of the most dangerous killers of all.

7. Never give your opinion in a meeting...wait until AFTER the meeting.

A surefire sign of a church that is on its deathbed is one that has major "meetings-after-the-meeting." You know, where no one voices their honest opinion or offers useful insight during the official meeting, but are quick to huddle in a corner or the church parking lot after the meeting to harp on how "it ought to be done."

There are chalk lines all over church parking lots outlining exactly where the murder took place.

8. Do nothing more than absolutely necessary.

Show up, go home, but don't be an active, engaged member of the church.

It's hard to reach "the least of these" when we're only doing the least we can do.

The sad reality, however, is that most people who only want to do the least, love to criticize those who are doing the most! They howl about how the church is being run by a clique, when they never offered or took initiative to get any work done.

They just stand on the sideline and watch the church die. At the very least, they are an accessory to the murder.

#### 9. Hold back on your giving to the Lord.

It takes money to do ministry—especially to do mercy ministry for the underserved in our communities. Tim Keller says that “mercy ministry is expensive.” When we hold back on our giving to the Lord and His work, we are limiting the work that can be done through the local church.

Additionally, since there are operational costs associated with a church or ministry, a lack of giving can lead to the church being foreclosed, laying off staff and other adverse results.

Some people say, “Well, all the church wants is money.” The same can be said of Walmart, yet they keep taking their money there! While I do not discount that there have been those who have abused and misused the church for financial gain, there are thousands of churches serving in their communities who are dying because of a lack of finances. When we stop giving, we are killing those churches...and the countless lives they touch each day.

#### 10. Don't reach out to the unchurched.

The primary purpose of the church is to introduce people to Jesus. The people in the pews must take ownership of that responsibility and become “minichurches” that reach out to the unchurched every day of the week and bring them to the house of the Lord to be discipled.

Churches need regular and consistent “transfusions.”

When new people are brought into the church, they bring new life and vibrancy. They ensure that the church doesn't get stuck in the old way of doing things. They bring fresh perspective, and they help keep the church alive. Don't kill your church! Go and bring in some new people today.

These are 10 ways to kill a church.

Can you think of any others? Do you agree or disagree with any on this list? Let me know in the comments section.