Overcoming the Messiah Complex

Messiah Complex is a state in which the individual believes himself/herself to be, or destined to become, the savior of the particular field, a group, an event, or a time period. In the ministry, we have discovered that many pastors believe they should be all things to everyone in their church. This type of thinking is dysfunctional and abnormal.

No pastor tries to displease his/her congregation but trying to please everyone in your congregation is virtually impossible. Most seasoned pastors have discovered this early in his/her career. They soon abandoned this idea and focused mainly on their calling and role: One of pleasing God and delivering the message that He has given them. A pastor’s heart has a very special calling that no other minister may have. It is a heart of caring, being a shepherd, looking after the flock, and bringing encouragement to live closer to the Word of God.

Your role as pastor may consist of many things. On one hand, as a pastor you deliver the Word of God, a message that God has given you. On the other hand, you are the CEO of your church, visiting those who are in the hospital or nursing homes, conducting weddings and funerals for the membership, and bringing hope for salvation.

Abnormal or dysfunctional thinking develops when a pastor believes he/she can do more to gain the acceptance from the membership. This belief is often generated by the occupation itself. Being a pastor can be a lonely occupation.

We have discovered that the ministry has insecurities associated with it. Listed below are some of the insecurities that we have found:

1. A pastor’s role is to encourage others to change. People, as a whole, are resistant to change. This may include exposing sin or other issues in one’s life that are not necessarily Christ-like. Pastors desire acceptance more than criticism.
2. Job-security is an issue with most pastors. They have a desire, like everyone else, to provide for their family. Many churches have a reputation of replacing pastors often. With this in mind, many pastors who are suffering from the Messiah Complex may try to please everyone on most everything.
3. Most pastors have told PCI that they do not have a close friend. They have no one else in whom to confide on issues, concerns, or other helps. A pastor will often try to gain acceptance as a way of feeling important to someone.
4. A pastor may try to take on too many responsibilities of the church as a way to be indispensible, creating a feeling of being needed.
5. A pastor often looks at numbers as to measure his/her success. Again, this may be a way to measure whether he/she is successful. Pastors usually attend denominational meetings or receive publications on what other churches are doing. Most consider success by numbers instead of spiritual growth.
6. We have observed that may pastors feel trapped or afraid of saying “no” to one of their members. Others seem afraid of confrontations. Again the pastor has the desire to please others.

A pastor has a special calling. A pastor should be careful of time management or **“balance”** so that things do not interfere with other church or personal responsibilities. We have heard humorous stories of pastors running to hospitals for a second or third cousin’s husband once removed to pray over him. The church member who may be carrying this burden for this “once-removed” relative does not believe he/she has the time to go, but somehow believes the pastor should go in his/her place. This is totally ridiculous. First of all, if a person has the burden for someone he/she believe needs prayer, he/she should be the one who goes, not the pastor, especially if the person is far away.

We have heard of other humorous stories. One member demanded his pastor to look for a lost pet because the member had to go to work the next day, saying, “Pastor, you do not have anything else to do, I expect my pastor to look for my pet.” This is a teaching moment, not Messiah Complex moment. Where is the balance? What about respect for God’s appointed? Have we positioned ourselves into a corner where we must do everything and afraid to say “no” or bring an alternate suggestion?

As a pastor, we are called to lead, instruct, educate, support, encourage, and deliver God’s message. It is refreshing to know that most people don’t expect us to be everything to everyone. I am not saying that we should not have compassion to help others but many of our pastors are afraid to instruct, present boundaries and structure where there seems to be none, and not allow “things” to rob or hinder what they are originally called to do. We can be so busy by doing things that we can be of no earthly good. People will also allow you to “volunteer and work beyond normal limits.”

The fact remains that you cannot be all things to everyone. What you can do is to fill the position of pastor in a healthy manner. Your role is to obey God above anything else. Secondly, you should take care of the needs of your family. Thirdly, you must focus on the responsibilities of your occupation. Please do not have your priorities backwards!

If you believe you are entering the Messiah Complex, please focus on obeying God, meeting the needs of your family, and complete any responsibilities you have as a pastor. In order to complete your responsibilities, it is a good idea to list them in order of priority. Some call this a checklist of things to do. Be sure to include personal time for prayer, time with your family, and allow God to use you to bless your congregation in a healthy manner.

Revelation: We are not the Messiah. Allow God to direct your path, allow Him to provide for you and others, and do not get caught up in thinking you have to do everything, especially to all people.

If you need information in maintaining boundaries, please go to our website: [www.pastoralcareinc.com](http://www.pastoralcareinc.com) or give us a call. We are always here to help you!!!

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