

# What to Do When Someone Leaves Your Church

Pastor, has this ever happened to you? You spend so much time and energy helping someone get their life straightened out, only to see them eventually leave for another church?

Maybe it was a family being torn apart, or maybe someone involved in drugs, or maybe someone with no employment. You gave them your time and even money out of your own pocket to help pull them out of the “miry clay” (Psalm 40:2). You counseled them, helped them find a job, possibly even provided housing or clothing.

Thanks to God’s grace, your many prayers, and all your hard work, a marvelous transformation occurred in the person’s life. The changed individual was welcomed with open arms into your church. They were happy, you were rejoicing, and everything seemed to be going well.

Then, one Sunday, they are missing from church. More absences follow. Reports come back that they have started attending another church. You meet with them and your fears are confirmed: they tell you that they like you and your church, but they have left because of the other church’s children’s program or youth program or preferred location or more modern facility.

We talk to pastors all the time who have experienced similar scenarios. How does that make you feel?

“Don’t they appreciate all the time, effort and money I sacrificed to lead them to salvation and to improve their lives? If it wasn’t for me, they would not have a home, a job, or a solid marriage! Don’t they like me or the church anymore? Don’t they remember where they came from? How could they do this to me? What am I doing wrong?”

Pastor, it is always hard to lose a church member. It is especially hard when it is someone to whom you have given so much, out of your genuine love for them. If that has happened to you or is happening now, my heart goes out to you.

## **Be Thankful**

However, please let me encourage you to focus on the positive and remain thankful. Be thankful that God worked through you to change someone’s life. And be thankful that that individual is still identifying with the Lord and His church, even if it is at another congregation.

## **Focus on Your Calling**

Most importantly, be thankful for your calling. Our role is to preach Christ and He crucified. Our goal is to bring as many people as we can to salvation. There is certainly no assurance that everyone will accept our message or stay with us after they do.

Paul had many detractors and defectors. But he was ever thankful for his calling:

“I was made a minister according to the gift of God’s grace which was given to me according to the working of His power. To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ.” (Ephesians 3:7-8)

### **Entrust Your Sheep to the Shepherd**

When ministry is getting you down, we have to take our thoughts and feelings to the Lord. Otherwise, negative thinking and negative attitudes will consume us.

When we minister in the life of an individual or family, we must turn them over to God. We must turn them over visually, physically, emotionally and spiritually. In such situations, I thank the Lord for allowing me to be a part of that person’s spiritual progress. Then I pray for God to set His guardian angels over them. Once I have turned them over to the Lord, I turn my focus back on what I am supposed to be doing: Preaching the Word and encouraging as many as possible to accept Jesus Christ as their Savior.

We cannot be there 24-7 for every individual and every family. Fortunately, there is a loving Shepherd who can. A great emotional release comes from turning people over to the Lord. A burden is lifted and the hurting and heartache subside!

### **Don’t Give Up!**

Pastor, thank you for blessing so many individuals and families! Please don’t grow weary in doing good (Gal 6:9-10). Your compassion for others should always be present for everyone to see. Thank you for all you do in the Kingdom of God. We love you and appreciate you so much.

If you have questions you would like to discuss with someone who cares or you need help with anything, please let us know here at Pastoral Care Inc.