5 SUGGESTIONS FOR PASTORS WHEN PEOPLE LEAVE YOUR CHURCH

By Ron Edmondson

Link: [5 Suggestions for Pastors When People Leave Your Church - Ron Edmondson](https://ronedmondson.com/2022/05/people-leave-church.html)

One tough reality of being a pastor is when people you thought were supportive of your ministry leave the church. For a variety of reasons, people will leave a church. Yes, it often hurts.

(Of course, it is not “your” church it is God’s church. For those who are going to correct me.)

Like when I was in the business world and lost a good customer it is hard not to take it personal. (And I realize the church is not a business – for those correctors.)

There are lots of reasons why someone leaves. Make any change and someone is not going to like it. Life changes and relationships often impact a person’s church attendance. Misunderstanding and unmet expectations cause some people to leave. Some people are choosing a different style of worship or different size church. There are a vast number of reasons.

**The point of this post is addressing how we respond as pastors and church leaders.**

**Here are 5 suggestions when people leave your church:**

**Accept it happens** –

It actually happens in churches where everything seems to be working at the time. We shouldn’t be surprised simply because they do or think it can’t or won’t happen in the church in which we minister.

**Admit it hurts** –

God is in charge of numbers. I get that. People are responsible to God and not the church. I get that too. People may leave because it’s the best thing for them spiritually. I totally get that also.

**The bigger issue is whether or not a person leaves “the” Church or “a” church.** If they are attending another church, we should take comfort in that, but pretending it doesn’t sting a little is like saying you didn’t feel the band aid being ripped off your arm. You are human. It hurts. It is difficult not to take it personally. Depending on the circumstances or way it happens it may hurt more sometimes than others, but it always hurts.

**Analyze the reason** –

This requires asking the hard questions, and admittedly, this too can hurt, but it’s helpful to know even if the answer is you. It requires humility to admit you’re not the church for everyone nor the minister everyone wants to shepherd them.

You can’t address what you don’t know and there are often valuable lessons to be learned from why a person chooses to leave a church.

**Adjust if necessary** –

This is not a blanket answer when people leave. Again, people leave and that shouldn’t alter who you are as a church every time.

**At the same time, don’t be afraid to admit you could have room to improve.** If people feel the church wasn’t meeting their needs, try to discern if it’s them or the church. If it was a matter of style, they didn’t appreciate that’s one issue, but if it’s something lacking from the church’s offerings – that you should have – you may need to make some adjustments. Be willing to learn.

**Attune your vision** –

Okay, it was obvious I was looking for an “A” word, but this is actually a good one.

Attune means “*to bring into harmony”.* That’s often necessary when people disappear from the church. Most likely their absence will affect others. You may need to realign people to the vision, especially when those leaving were previously and visibly committed. Assure people you are listening, and genuinely be listening, but in the end stay true to the God-given vision God has called you to lead.

Again, no one wants people to leave, especially if they are leaving upset with you or the church. It is a part of church leadership. Learning to process it will make us better equipped to minister to the ones who stay, and the new people God will bring.