

One of the Terrible Mistakes We Make as Pastors (and Leaders)

By [Ron Edmondson](#) April 13, 2023

There are many mistakes we make as pastors. I'm certain I make one nearly every day. This post is only about one mistake. Only one, but one of the worst mistakes pastors make. Frankly, I'm as guilty of this one as anyone. I think most of us are prone to making this mistake – in any realm of leadership.

Here is one of the worst mistakes pastors make in leadership:

Allowing a few negative voices to overwhelm us.

Is that one of your mistakes?

Be careful. There is a Biblical principle here.

"Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?" (1 Corinthians 5:6)

When we place our focus on a few negatives, it injures everyone.

- We cater to them.
- Try to appease them.
- Worry about them.
- Ultimately, we neglect the greater good.

In the end, here's the strange part I've seen –

We usually find out nothing we could have done would have made them happy anyway.

Negative people are often negative for reasons other than something you did as a leader.

They are hurting.

Of course, we need to love them, pray for them, and help them as we can. But when we let their negativity control us everyone loses.

The bottom line is this mistake drains your energy and valuable resources as a leader and keeps you from investing fully in people who believe in the vision, support leadership and are ready to help you build a great church.

It's counterproductive. At best.

So, be honest with yourself.

Is your leadership of the church being dominated by a few negative voices?

I'm not saying we shouldn't listen to negative voices. We grow this way. I have written before that I even listen to anonymous voices. I've written about the [Right Ways](#) and the [Wrong Ways](#) to respond to criticism. I'm not afraid of criticism. I just believe we just have to be careful to filter them in a healthy way.

For example, when you deal with critical people, ask yourself:

1. Are these people generally positive, supportive people – or are they negative, divisive people?
2. Is what they are saying helpful? If you took their suggestion, would it improve the overall vision of the church?
3. Do they represent a larger audience or are they lone voices? You need to know if the criticism is representative or personal. The fact is some people will never be on board with the direction of the church and you can't do anything about that. Sometimes they represent a larger audience.

Your answers to those types of questions should change the weight of their negativity you own and the attention you give to their complaints. Frankly, the amount of time you spend appeasing those complainers.

I realize if you've been yielding to the few negative voices this post might sting a bit.

On the other hand, if you're one of the negative voices – the kind who is wasting everyone's time – well, you don't like me much right now. I just called you out. Sorry about that.

The goal of this blog is to help us lead better, and I know from experience, when I give too much authority and attention to negativity I am not leading at my best.

Check out my leadership [podcast](#) where we discuss issues of leadership nuggets in a practical way. Plus, check out the other [Lifeway Leadership Podcasts](#).