

WHEN THE CHURCH DAMAGES YOU...

By Todd Rhoades

Sooner or later... most of us get hurt

Ministry is crazy.

Churches are crazy.

And I love them both.

But sometimes, usually at least once in your ministry career, you'll find yourself at a really difficult point in your ministry.

Things aren't going well.

There is conflict.

It seems like you're treading water, or worse yet, on a sinking ship.

I found that I could deal with this type of situation for a short period of time. But over time if things didn't change, it was very easy for me to start to withdraw.

I read this from Jamie Brown recently, and I can tell you... 'been there, done that'...

*"We get resentful towards the church. We become hardened. We react to almost everything with cynicism. **We lead out of a defensive posture. And in our heart of hearts, we want to run away.** It's all understandable, and every single person in ministry has experienced (or is currently experiencing) these symptoms. It doesn't mean anything's wrong with you, but it does mean God is getting your attention."*

So... what do you do when God 'gets your attention'? For me, it always meant a season of deep introspection.

What are the reasons behind what is going on? Are they self-induced?

(HINT: You might not be the best one to answer that... that's where unbiased friends and confidants that don't have a dog in your race are extremely important).

When I start feeling this way, I always try to ask myself: What is the core problem here? The longer I wait to ask that question, the

harder it is to remember how things actually started. Then I start looking for long-term solutions.

Can I live out my long-term ministry plan in the place I am? Do I need to look elsewhere? Do I have the energy and will to work through this? Is it possible to come out stronger on the other side? Lots of questions. (Like I said, this is the deep introspection stage).

As you come up with answers to your questions, you'll do one of three things:

1. Move to fix the problem where you are and move past it.
2. Determine that it's time to move on and that you really need to find a new place of ministry.
3. Do nothing.

I was one that did 'nothing' for too long. Scared to stay and work things out (or not knowing how to) or scared to step out into a new chapter.

We talk with church staff candidates every day that are tired, worn, bruised, beaten, burned out, cynical, and unhealthy.

Our encouragement is always to try to work through the situation you're currently in (including the deep introspection) before you move on. But you cannot do 'nothing' for an extended period of

time. Time will make the wounds deepen, the hurt to magnify, and your spirit to become broken.

When we talk to candidates, it's pretty easy in the first five minutes to see where they are on this journey.

Where are YOU today? Are you in a tough patch? Do you need to do some deep introspection?

Find someone you trust that you can talk to. Someone not from your current church. Someone without a dog in your fight. Ask them for their perspective. And more importantly, step away (even for a few hours) and get some alone time with God to allow him to speak into your situation. Many times these two practical things can help you get back on the path to seeing what God has for you next.

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Todd has invested over 30 years in serving churches, having served as a worship pastor for over 15 years, a church elder for more than a decade, and in various ministry leadership roles in both the business and non-profit sectors. As the original founder and developer of ChurchStaffing.com, Todd fundamentally changed the way thousands of churches search for pastors and staff on the internet. Most recently, Todd's work with Leadership Network has provided him exposure to the innovative trends in today's church and inside knowledge of how healthy churches operate and uses it to help churches find a healthy, long-term fit for their next team member. Todd is a graduate of Cedarville University, and lives in Bryan, OH with his wife, Dawn.