

DO YOU KNOW THE MOST DANGEROUS PERSON IN YOUR CHURCH?¹

Erik Raymond

In addition to leading and teaching, pastors are called to protect or guard the flock (Titus 1:5, 9; 2:15; John 21:15–19). Therefore, it logically follows that it is important for pastors to know who is in attendance and membership within the congregation. There are obviously many practical reasons for this, but one is certainly to protect the flock from potential harm.

So I ask you, “Who is the most dangerous guy at your church?”

Here I am not so much aiming at an individual as I am looking at a type of person.

Sure, we all can spot the unbeliever who doesn’t fluently speak the language of Zion, we can identify the person from doctrinally anemic backgrounds because they keep cutting themselves with the sharp knives in the theology drawer, and of course, any Calvinist can sniff out an Arminian within 20 seconds.

But I submit that these types of people are not the most dangerous people who attend your church. At least, they are not in my experience.

Instead, the most dangerous person at your church is the apparently smart guy who is unteachable. When I say “unteachable,” I mean that he has it all figured out. He is the classic “Don’t confuse me with the facts, I know what I believe” guy.

This is the guy who seems to have a lot of biblical knowledge. He can drop the 30 lb. words and effectively argue his point. Very often, he is quite involved and appears to have things together. However, he is dangerous because of the reason you would not think; he is unteachable.

Let me give you some reasons why and how he is dangerous:

1. He Is Gospel-Eclipsing

The great commission has learning embedded in it (Matthew 28:18–20). This means that being a disciple is being one who is always learning. Therefore, to have it all figured out is to deny who you are. As Christians, we have to be people who are learning; this includes everyone from pastors to children.

2. He Is Critical

If this guy is not being moved by the ministry of the Word, he is likely gathering bullets to shoot at leaders. He sits quietly during the sermons and teachings only to pick apart everything like a Monday morning quarterback. His unteachability looks the exact opposite of what James 1 teaches: Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore, put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. (James 1:20–21)

¹ http://www.sermoncentral.com/pastors-preaching-articles/erik-raymond-do-you-know-the-most-dangerous-person-in-your-church-1086.asp?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=BetterPreachingUpdate

(Please note this is not a repudiation of constructive criticism. This is desperately needed. There is a difference between constructive and destructive criticism, however.)

3. He Is Divisive

This is dangerous for the church in that it invariably brings division (Titus 3:10). This type of boiling pot eventually spills over, and when he does, he hurts unity and people.

In my experience, division in the church usually is a result of somebody being unteachable. This type of thing has a long legacy. Consider how Diotrephes liked to put himself first and stir up division. How did he do this? He did not submit to the teaching of the Apostles (3 John 9–10). He was unteachable.

This is obviously dangerous for his own soul but also for the church. Just as Diotrephes had influence in that congregation, so too the unteachable guy no doubt has influence in your local assembly. The influence of an unteachable guy is a vehicle for division.

4. He Is Joy-Robbing

A church that is teachable brings its leaders joy. A church or church member who is not robs them of joy. It's that simple (Hebrews 13:7, 10). I can attest to the fact that this is very true.

5. He Is a Time-Waster

Let me be careful how I say this. I don't mean that labor in the ministry is a waste of time. But what I do mean is that unteachable guy is one who continues to take up pastoral leadership's time with arguments. He just keeps resetting the same issue over and over again. He can find anything to nitpick and be critical about. So in this sense, he is a waste of time. Or, as Paul might say, the labor is in vain (Philippians 2:16; 2 Thessalonians 3:5).

So what do you do with him?

Pray for him

Forbid it that pastors become callous and unmoved themselves! The desire is for growth in the gospel. Therefore, pray (Colossians 1:9-14; 2 Peter 3:18).

Minimize his influence

Pastors should always be careful about who is appointed unto leadership. In this case, it would obviously make sense not to just put the Bible trivia champ in charge of teaching and leadership items. This is because the Bible trivia champ could also be a spiritual MMA champ on the side.

Watch him and the sheep

If this guy is a Christian, then he must be cared for, too. The pastor must do this while guarding and caring for the flock. This is the type of thing that keeps pastors up at night (see #4 above).

Lovingly aim to teach him

Keep on keeping on (Titus 2:15).

Confront where necessary

When there is sin involved, Jesus is clear (Matthew 18:15–18).

This type of thing weighs heavy upon pastors and church members alike. Therefore, even the consideration of such things should cause us to pause, evaluate our own hearts, and pray for receptivity of the word of Christ (James 1:20ff; Colossians 3:15).

