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TOP 10 LIST:

Unity Destroyers

by Leslie Ann Jones

Every church has them. People and things that rip apart its fragile unity. Sadly, it doesn't take much to splinter a church and turn an isolated incident or minor disagreement into an all-out family feud. Here are 10 of the most common destroyers of church unity.

10. THE GOSSIP.

Most famous for disguising rumors and gossip as prayer requests, the gossip loves a good story. She just wants you to know what's going on in everyone else's private lives so you can faithfully pray for them. There's nothing wrong with that, right?

9. THE KNOW-IT-ALL.

The know-it-all doesn't care that the pastor went to seminary and holds an advanced degree in theology; he always knows the correct interpretation of a controversial passage, and he's not afraid to share it—loudly.

8. THE CONTROL FREAK.

Blessed with the spiritual gift of leadership (or so she thinks), the control freak believes she should be in charge of everything. It's all for the sake of putting to use the gift God freely bestowed upon her, even if it means she has to stifle other people's gifts in the process.

7. THE COLOR OF THE CARPET.

When it's time to trade out the dusty rose carpet for

a more subtle shade, be prepared for a major rift between the "Khaki Kamp" and the "Camel Crew." Who cares if khaki and camel reside just a few shades apart on the color wheel? Choosing the right color is one of the most important decisions the church will make. After all, we'll be stuck with it for at least 30 more years.

6. THE BIG SCREEN.

Meet one of the most controversial fixtures making an appearance in traditional churches today. Everyone knows that the hymnal is second only to the Bible in holiness. Giving it up in favor of words on a screen is just plain sacrilegious, not to mention wasteful. Do you know how much those hymn books cost?

5. THE DYNASTY.

Most churches have at least one dynasty, a ruling family that makes all the important decisions in the church by throwing around their collective weight. The real problem arises when a church has two dynasties at odds with one another.

When that happens, take cover and look for an escape route: chaos is bound to ensue!

4. THE STICK-IN-THE-MUD.

Famous for refusing to change, the stick-in-the-mud lives in the past, basking in the good old days. Convinced that anything new comes straight from the Devil, the stick-in-the-mud spends all his time resisting the newfangled ideas that the trendster (see next entry) throws at him.

3. THE TRENDSTER.

In contrast to the stick-in-the-mud, the trendster lives for change and floats along on the wave of what's popular right now. One day that might be the big screen, the next it may be the hymnal. Her favorite phrase? "Everyone's doing it."

2. THE COMPLAINER.

Nothing can please the complainer. The carpet is the wrong color. The big screen is too big. The money is being wasted. The dynasty is too controlling. The stick-in-the-mud won't change.

The trendster changes too much. The gossip keeps spreading rumors, and the know-it-all doesn't know anything at all.

1. THE MONEY.

The source of many problems, the money divides congregations simply by its presence . . . or absence. When the money makes an appearance, it's sure to ruffle feathers over tithing or start budget wars. Don't say I didn't warn you.

(Now, we've delivered our list of the top 10 unity destroyers with a healthy dose of sarcasm, but we hope our point is clear. We, the church, often get caught up in conflict over things that have absolutely no eternal value. The church exists so that we can invite others into a relationship with God. Our actions, ministries, decisions, and decision-making as the church should point others to Christ. Some decisions we face as a church are eternally significant and we should treat them as such; others aren't. But everything we do should bring glory to our God.) **EC**



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