

12 Lies Most Churches Believe
Beliefs And Behaviors That Kill Their Churches
A Travel Free Learning Article

By

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Over the past several months I have begun to note lies and deceptions that provide deep roots for the dysfunction and ineffectiveness of many leaders and/or their churches. I am keenly aware that for many lies are a judgment call and based on one's limited knowledge and often one's perspective or belief system. Others believe truth for the church comes from the Bible. Others believe ultimate truth is found in the person of Christ. With this in mind consider some of the lies I believe in large part responsible for the diminished impact and effectiveness of many churches in our 21st century world.

When I started my list I came up with 7, then 9, and now I have 21. The list continues to grow, and morph as I dialogue and continue to observe. Today, I share 12 lies for your consideration and invite your feedback. These observations are taking me to scripture. I'm finding many examples of how deception, lies, and self deception have sabotaged and hindered some of the people of God throughout church history. How is it that lies are guiding many churches? Could the self deception and congregational deception of distorted truths be just the toolkit that the devil is using to minimize the impact and influence of the church in today's world?

I will be conducting workshops in churches to coach them to discover their lies, the impact and manifestations of those lies on the forward movement of the church. Then we will discover and commit to taking next steps to move them forward in more effective ministry. Contact me at EHammett@thecolumbiapartnership.org if you feel this might be helpful for your church or convention/denomination.

12 Lies: Their Roots, Manifestation, and Impact?

1. **Returning to the *good old days* is the way forward for our church.** Many from the builder generation and some boomers long for the *good old days* in life and church. In a day of rapid change going back is not likely to be a forward step for new generations.
2. **Ministry is the primary responsibility of the pastor and staff.** So many believe that hiring pastor and staff is the way to grow a church and insure ministry happens. As best I understand scripture, all believers are ministers and responsible unto God for impacting the world we live and work in daily.
3. **Ministry is for the church members to support and pray for, but not something they are to do.** The mobilization of all believers is critical to church rebuilding our reputation in the world and touching the vast array of human need. A few professional clergy can no longer be expected to carry the weight of ministry in the church or world.
4. **Care-giving for the membership is the primary mission of the church.** Many members believe the church exist to care for them. In reality the church was never created for those on the inside, but rather to reach and impact those on the outside of the church walls. When care-giving of membership dominates church impact fades.
5. **The budget of the church is for those who give not for those who do not give or come to church.** The purpose of most church budgets by design is to provide facilities, programs and services for the membership. While this is understandable the mission of the church is not self-

care but missional experiences. Missional experiences will likely focus on building bridges between the church and the unchurched.

6. **Church meetings, ministries and programs are primarily to accommodate the needs and preferences of church members rather than those inactive or beyond the membership.** So often our church meetings, meeting agendas, desired outcomes of programs are evaluated on how they were received by the membership or attendees. Maybe a better evaluation is what happened in the meeting or program that connected with the unchurched and those seeking.
7. **Those who are not like us should not be invited or encouraged be among us or part of us.** In an age of growing diversity, pluralism and differences of lifestyle, rituals and faith practices how does the church function in less judgmental ways and more inclusive and embracing ways? What value is there in preserving one's ethnic or personal preferences and how can churches manifest this in programming?
8. **Funding for ministry for our church comes only from the tithes and offerings of membership and guests.** Creative avenues for funding ministry have come to the forefront in days of a destabilized economy. Global issues impact local availability of funds. Traditional churches have basically depended on the tithes and offerings of the members for funding of ministry. Today, the net is being cast broader to invite community partnerships, global partnerships and local sponsors into the funding and planning streams.
9. **Judging others is essential if the church is to stay pure and faithful.** Far too much judgment occurs in most churches for the unchurched to find enough comfort and invitation. The church culture often believes *love the sinner and hate the sin* is the way to go. Such attitude builds barriers that prevent the struggling from engaging church in a way that can build bridges instead of barriers.
10. **As a church we are faithful if we preserve the past than create the future.** There is something about preserving what we were that makes many feel good about ourselves. It seems we believe in the past we got it right and we need to return to the basics. I'm not sure about that. Look where the church's activities and beliefs of the past have led us. Our efforts have created 70% of our current population being defined as unchurched and 90% of our churches declining in attendance. That's something to preserve?
11. **Adults do not want to serve.** So many churches are struggling to find leaders. Teachers, deacons, elders are becoming more and more scarce and difficult to enlist. My experience says it's not that adults do not want to serve as much as they do not want to serve doing the things we ask them to do. The new generation is a hands-on generation and wants to serve. Maybe the church needs to assess the value of what we are inviting them to do and the way we are inviting them to do something.
12. **Preserving doctrinal purity and denominational alignment are essential if the church is to move forward in faith and function.** Homogeneity of doctrine, beliefs, behaviors, lifestyles and practices seems to be the driver and standard for evaluating what's in and what's out in terms of the church. How does this align with scripture and with an increasingly diverse culture is a key path for exploring? How does denominational alignment serve connecting with others beyond the church culture is fast becoming a pressing issue for many.

Mining for Truth

Some will likely say these are only my opinions, based on my personal bias. I'm sure that all of us face this challenge and reality. How then do we mine for the truth about these practical, personal issues? I am using the following template as I continue my study, prayer and journaling:

1. How often do I observe the lie?

2. What is the impact?
3. How to pray through and listen for God's leadership concerning the lie?
4. What is the Biblical lens for understanding this lie?
5. Where are the roots of the lie in this setting?
6. Where are the roots of the solutions?
7. How can this lie be turned into a launch pad for growth?
8. What are the indicators that there is openness to dealing with the distorted truth?
9. What is the best way to correct the lie?
10. What percentage of the leadership and congregation embrace the lie?

Many, if not most, churches regardless of denominational affiliation, size, typology seem to embrace many of these lies. In fact, some will fight for the truth of these lies. In an age where some believe truth is relative that may be the way some choose to deal with these realities. I am always shocked at how fierce Christians get and how frequently we fight—often each other—to keep things the way they are; even though many churches are significantly losing impact, membership and influence. It seems we are more concerned about preserving what we believe rather than pursuing what is effective. Just because that is *the way it has always been* does not necessarily make it right or wrong! Just because that is what my granddaddy or grandmother, mom or dad believes does not make it right or wrong. Going to scripture is often not much help either, because so many of us have so many different ways to interpret scripture and there are so many scriptures that are no longer practiced and accepted as truth.

I'm simply asking for you to observe, pray and dialogue about these lies; at least through my filters. What is God saying to you? Your church? What evidences are present that these issues are truth that brings forth much fruit? What evidences are present that these issues are lies and are responsible for keeping you/your church stuck, ineffective and lacking impact in your community?

Important Things to Know

Eddie Hammett is a Ministry Partner with The Columbia Partnership. He is a certified coach with the International Coach Federation. Recent books of which he is the author or co-author are *Reaching People Under 40 While Keeping People Over 60*, *Spiritual Leadership in a Secular Age*, and *Making Shifts Without Making Waves*. He is available for speaking and coaching with leaders, congregations, denominations, and parachurch organizations. His personal web site is www.TransformingSolutions.org. His work is also highlighted at www.cbfnc.org.

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