

How Might One Improve The Church?

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The following are responses to Chuck Lawless on “12 Reasons People Leave a Church”, focus group discussions, and personal observations.

There can be a difficulty when **members value attendance** (religiosity) **over engagement** (spirituality). The fastest growing local Protestant Church emphasizes the need for each member to be involved in a “spiritual community project”. Another Protestant Church raised funds, purchased and remodeled a house so that there were two separate living quarters and then allowed distant families (100-150 miles away) to use it free when a relative had to have weekly cancer treatments. They also stock the pantry! That same church has an annual program that raises well over \$60 thousand dollars so they can give 25+ freshmen scholarships to young members going to college. **When church members become connected, then both the church and individual members grow spiritually.**

There can be a difficulty when there is a **lack of personal attention to members’ needs**. Individuals testify that they have been a church member for years (10 – 25) and have had many personal issues, but were not visited by a church official. However, others testify that an organized church visitation committee (in a church of 900 plus members) visits all members each year; that a pastor of a 250 member church visits individual members on their birthday; and a pastor of a small congregation visits the 10 – 15 widows or widowers monthly and brings them cookies for a mid-morning “hot drink and discussion.”

There **can be difficulty when there is authoritarian leadership** or where there is exclusion instead of inclusion. Some church organizations have office holders, such as elders, who serve two three-year terms and then don’t serve as an elder for the next three years. Some churches might have a number of office holders that have served 10 - 25 years when other members might want to be actively involved. When church decisions that affect the whole membership are to be made then members should have input. **If an individual or a small committee makes a decision without including others then those members who are not included, feel excluded.** When one is continually excluded, then one tends to withdraw support of the organization.

There **can be difficulty when non-theological issues become more important than spiritual or theological issues**. Some issues are cultural, such as style of dress or loudly saying “amen” when agreeing with the preacher. Although important in a particular environment should not be overemphasized. A church board was discussing whether or not to disfellowship a young lady. A new female appointee to the board asked, “has anyone talked to her?” No one had. Discussion changed as board members considered possible approaches to assist the person.

These are some ideas on how to improve the church? **What are yours?**