

The Damage Being Done By People With Personal Agendas

Folks, just a few weeks ago, JoAnne and I celebrated our 49th wedding anniversary. During almost all of these 49 years, we have worked together in active full-time ministry. She has stood with me faithfully as I have pastored churches, done many years of traveling evangelism, and of course, spent numbers of years working in mission work around the world. During these years we have really been blessed by God in so many ways. We have seen victory after victory in and through our ministry, but we also have experienced some terrible emotional, psychological, and even spiritual damage that has been caused by careless and selfish people who have come to work with us with the promise of helping to build our ministries, but then many times in just short order, they have done an enormous amount of damage to us personally and to our growing ministries by jumping ship and using our ministries as a spring board to follow their own selfish motives and start or carry on ministries that compete with our work. Of course, we would be thrilled for these people if they would conduct themselves as true Christians, handle things in a biblical way, and go out on their own without doing damage to other ministries. Yet, we rarely ever see these situations handled like this. Instead, they usually piggy-back on ours or someone else's ministry, build up a following from other people's ministries, and then go out on their own and start new works or ministries usually in the same areas and compete with the same ministries they have learned from. Personally, I believe this kind of behavior is Satanic, and I have yet to see a new ministry which has been started to compete with other ministries in the same area, the same styles, or even working with the same type of people, which was successful long term. I am going to give you some examples from our own 48 years of ministry, and then I will share with you a story from the Bible where someone decided to try and purchase the power of God and manipulate people in order to carry on another lucrative ministry based upon the wrong motives. I am writing on this to hopefully help stop some of this evil work that that I am witnessing almost everywhere I go today. I beg all of you to read this carefully and then start a divine vigil to help us spot these people with their own personal agendas, and somehow expose these people rather than looking over their sins and failing to hold them accountable. The Kingdom of God is being hurt by these people and we must do everything we can to help squelch the damage that is being done to people, to mission

ministries, children's homes, and especially to churches all across this country and even out on the mission field. Let me give you some true examples where people have caused unbelievable damage to good churches, great pastors, mission organizations, and even orphanages or children homes.

I will begin with an incident in my life and the life of one of the great churches I was pastoring. My family and I were really hurt through this terrible ordeal, and I believe we are yet scarred by this even until this very day. When I was attending the seminary in Florida, I fell in love with a dear man of God and we became extremely good friends. In fact, I believe we became too good of friends, and I must admit that I loved and respected him so much that I almost made him my personal hero. He was a former member of the special forces in Vietnam, and he was a great patriot, wonderful preacher, and the husband of a good wife. Every fall we tried to spend time deer hunting, fellowshiping together and even doing ministry together in prisons. We did this for several years even after my wife and I moved back to North Carolina. I was doing traveling evangelism, and so I always made it possible to be back in Florida to preach for him or to go deer hunting out in the cold Florida sand and swamps.

After working with this dear man for sometime, I was called to be the senior pastor of a struggling church in another state. As we were making preparations to move to our new field, this brother told me that he would really like to move his sickly wife out of the hot summers in Florida to another kind of climate. I had told this preacher that I hoped to start a new Bible institute in my new church. When I told him this, he spoke and said, "why don't you help move us to that city with you, and in addition to being a prison missionary, I will help you with the Bible institute." Well, I listened to him and agreed to help him in every way that I could.

After being on the new church field for a while, my wife and I and some people from our church did indeed help this man move his family out of Florida. We helped him to get a nice small home and our new church agreed to support his mission work with quite a bit of financial support. Well, everything went very well until a few months after he and his wife came to work in our ministry I discovered that a lot of our young preachers in our church were traveling to prisons to help him with his prison ministry. Then, after awhile I noticed that these young preacher guys (I had 15 in my church)

began to give us a lot of trouble in the church in whatever decision we had to make or in any new project that we attempted. They just would not go along with it, and I could sense that tension was building in a church where God was already doing a lot of healing from a past squabble and split the church had experienced. Then, one afternoon another preacher friend of mine was sitting in my living room when he told me that this dear brother missionary had told another preacher that one day I would leave the church and he would take over. Well folks, this was the straw that broke the camel's back. I immediately started dealing with the problem, and man, did we have a blow up. This former Vietnam veteran got so mad that he threatened me and ten other staff members and deacons and he ran out the door of my study only to cause a huge mess in the church and take over 60 people out of our church. He had come to help us in our church build a great church, but he decided in just a short time that he could do church better than I could so because of his personal agenda, he almost destroyed this great church again, and it ended up causing him and eventually my family and me leaving the church also. Why? Because he came with a resolute and determined personal agenda that regardless of what it cost our church and me and my family, he was going to start his new ministry. I believe the church is still suffering today because of the damage done. I will confess that I probably didn't handle everything just the way I should have, but I would never have dreamed that this dear brother would destroy a wonderful church while trying to get his own way.

Another Example

Another example of the devastating consequences of a man with his own personal agenda pertains to a dear pastor friend of mine in another state. This dear pastor is a great man of God, and one that has compassion for hurting people. In the city where this dear friend of mine pastors, another pastor was accused by his congregation of having an immoral relationship with another woman. This pastor swore up and down that he had not committed adultery, but the church did not believe him and ultimately asked this pastor to leave. The pastor had to leave and he came to my dear pastor friend explaining to him that he was not guilty of the the charges against him, and he wanted to know if he and his wife to could attend my friends church. After my pastor friend discussed the matter with the indicted pastor for a long time, my friend said yes that he would allow the brother to bring his wife and attend church there. The man and his wife started coming

to my pastor friend's church and they were very faithful for a long time. So, after my pastor friend saw that he could probably trust this man, he gave the alleged fallen pastor a position as a Sunday School teacher. The man was happy to be able to teach again and he began to build his Sunday School class from within the membership of my pastor friend's church, but also with some people who came from his former church. Some time went by and this alleged fallen pastor built up his class to about 200 people in a church of about 2,000 people. Then, he started a campaign to get rid of my friend, the Senior Pastor, because he wanted to try and get the church. When all was said and done, the supposedly forgiven fallen pastor took over 200 people out of my friend's church and just about destroyed this great church. Why did this happen? Because this alleged fallen pastor came with his own agenda and decided that he would destroy a great church because of his sinful motive and ego-centric agenda. My friend's church suffered for a very long time over the terrible action of this wicked pastor. I came to the conclusion that if he lied about his purpose and agenda in my friend's pastorate, he probably also lied about having an affair with another woman. But the damage was done because of a man with a personal agenda. He wanted to piggy-back on his friend's kindness and church in order for him to get another church again.

A Very Personal Example

Now I want to give you another example of action taken by people with their own personal agendas which has hurt our GIMI mission ministry. JoAnne and I took over this ministry and changed the name to Gateway International Missions thirteen years ago. These thirteen years have been just one part of over 28 years that JoAnne and I have worked in Africa. We have worked so hard to keep this work going, and truthfully, we have had some people that have really been a blessing to us and done all they could to help us. However, I must tell you that quite a few people who participated in this ministry came with the wrong motives and their own personal agendas which have hurt this great work and handicapped a lot that we have tried to accomplish. The main reason most of these have caused problems for GIMI is that they thought they were smarter than myself or JoAnne about mission work, and they never had a teachable spirit. They came into our ministry like a bull in a china shop blowing their success oriented smoke and promising to become a part of our team. However, they were never interested in being on our team, but only interested in gaining an entrance into Africa where they wanted to carry

out their own personal agenda. They were not truthful with me about working to support and expand GIMI, but they came with the major purpose of piggy-backing on our ministry until they met the right people, learned enough to start their own ministry in competition with what we have been doing, and then they went their merry way in a non-Christian manner and started a competitive ministry in defiance of anything I told them.

We have even had several people come to work with GIMI who started out giving big money and promising to really support what we are doing, but they only supported us long enough to get what they wanted with their own personal agendas and they left us standing in wonderment as they went out the door. And, it would have been enough for them to just leave, but the tragic thing is that some of these people convinced some of our supporters to stop supporting us and start supporting their new ministry, and so we lost a number of supporters because of these people with their own agendas. Folks, I can assure you that JoAnne and I have seen several of these people come and go during the past thirteen years. We still love them, but they will suffer for the damage they caused this ministry as the result of their ego-centric selfish agendas. They have made many to believe that they are in the will of God, but I assure you that no one has ever been in God's will who hurt or damaged another ministry, another church, or any person in order for them to get their way and accomplish their personal agendas. Some of these people have been preachers, teachers, singers, board members, children's workers, and many other vocations. Yet, they all came with personal agendas and without a teachable spirit. I must confess that I have never met a person with a personal agenda who had a teachable spirit. And, as far as I am concerned, the greatest trait of a successful leader is being teachable. When we have closed the door to greater learning and listening, we have also closed the door to future success in the will of God!

Simon The Sorcerer, A Man With His Own Personal Agenda!

Earlier I promised you an example of a man in the Bible who had his own personal agenda. Today I am going to give you this story. It is the story of Simon the sorcerer, and because of his terribly wrong motive, he desecrated what God was doing through Peter and John and the other disciples of our Lord by trying to buy the power that the apostles had manifested when they laid their hands on some people and they were given

the Holy Spirit. This story is found in **Acts 8:9-25**. I would encourage you to go to your Bible and read this story.

Simon was a sorcerer and a man under the power of Satan. According to this story, Simon was a man who wanted power in order to become a great man. He had manipulated people, and probably had done much damage in order to be seen of men and to ruthlessly take people's money. Philip the evangelist came to town preaching about things concerning the Kingdom of God. The scripture tells us that many believed, even Simon. However, I am not sure that Simon got real salvation because his heart was still not right when he saw the other disciples anointing believers and these believers were filled with the Holy Ghost. Simon was so envious of this ability to lay hands on others and for them to be filled with the Holy Spirit, that he was willing to pay much money to get this gift. But, we learn in this story that Peter rebuked Simon harshly. In **Acts 8:20-21**, we find these words, **"But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou has neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God."** I believe that Peter's rebuke of Simon reveals that Simon had made a false profession in Christ with the wrong motive in order to gain the attention of others. In other words, he had come to observe the other disciples with the wrong motive and with his own personal agenda. He was not interested in being part of the team that had the power of God on them for use in blessing others, but he was only interested in his own personal agenda, hopefully, to gain position and earthly influence and power. So, as Peter told him, his heart was not right with God. He loved the excitement that was coming the disciples' way, but his motives were wrong because he had his own selfish and ego-centric agenda. And, I can tell you that Simon did a lot of damage to the testimony of the other disciples, but Peter was not about to leave Simon without accountability. So, Peter told Simon to repent and get right with God lest he perish without Christ. And, I think it is rather ironic that Peter points out that Simon's heart was full of bitterness. May I say to you that usually people who come with their own agendas and want to exploit the power and testimony of God or God's people are almost always filled with bitterness from their past lives, and now they have something to prove. They are usually very insecure and in everything they do, they must prove that they can do the work better than someone else. If they have stopped being teachable, they believe they have all of the

answers they need, and thus they don't want people to teach them or hold them accountable for their behavior.

So folks, will you please help me to try and stop some of the damage that is being done to the cause of Christ by these who promise to become your team members, but turn out to be lone rangers with their own personal agendas? They must be stopped because of the hurt and heartache they are causing. As I sit here this morning writing, I might say that figuratively speaking, I am still bleeding from the wounds of those who promised to be good team members, but turned out to be lone rangers with personal agendas and plans. There might be those who try to defend their personal behavior by saying that God has led them to go on their own, but if they have been led to do so, they will not hurt or damage others, other churches, or other believers by their decisions to carry out their personal agendas.

