

**HOW TO SURVIVE A CHURCH SPLIT**

**Dr. Mike Wells**

There is nothing more excruciating in emotional pain than to find yourself as a pastor in the middle a church split. Now, I am not talking about a few people leaving; I am talking about a mean spirited church split. Not only are you personally devastated by it, but also your family feels far more the depth of the split than the pastor does. There is so much soul-searching that goes on that if it is not dealt with, it could lead to personal guilt; yet the pastor or his family had nothing to do 99% of the wrong. The birth of bitterness could arise in your family if this is not handled properly.

The survival of a church split is totally dependent upon the spirit of the man of God and his dear wife. In the beginning, neither of you are sure of who exactly will be standing once the smoke clears. The only thing you can be sure of is the strength and support that you have for each other. That does not presuppose the disloyalty of those around you; rather, it is a focusing on each other for the strength and courage to go on.

If you have an assistant pastor who has rallied to your side, that is wonderful; but you must still maintain a focus on the winning of souls to Christ and not on the demise of your enemies. It is very easy to get into the vengeance mode; run from the temptation and you will find victory will come quicker and easier. Those close to you who know all of the wickedness and lies will tend to become combative and protective of you; you must restrain yourself to make every move count. When you do take a stand it has to be grounded in principle and not passion or personality.

Those around you and outside of your family who are for you should be taught to be friendly yet firm when it comes to unintended confrontations. You must keep your family living positive as long as possible.

1. Realize that when one person leaves it normally will effect and infect five other people to follow.
2. Get to those who are close to the ringleaders of the split and take them soul winning.
3. Develop a social/economic graph that puts together who is close to who and immediately begin to work on those whose lines intersect.
4. Figure out who works together or who socializes with whom.
5. Sometimes a second job, such as the delivering of newspapers, will bring them together.
6. Once it is apparent that you have lost someone, dictate a sweet letter to him or her and recount all the wonderful times you had together.
7. Generally there are only one or two rebellious people in the group; the majority are decent people who are easily influenced or basically so insecure that they just do not want to get involved.
8. Quote Matthew 16:18 to God and remind Him of what He wrote; claim it as a church split verse. Look for Bible verses to remind God of His espoused bride and her dependence upon Him.
9. Do not preach about the split.
10. If something just must be said, do it on a Wednesday night and be very careful what you say. Prepare diligently those statements and write them word-for-word; do not vary from your writing.
11. Figure up the financial loss.
12. Immediately go on a campaign to bolster the folks who stayed. Brag on them.
13. Preach optimistic sermons.
14. Deal with issues outside your church that everyone can say “Amen” too. Abortion, homosexuality, alcoholism, or child abuse would make good topics to preach on.
15. Let every creditor know that you are going to pay your bills. Do not dodge phone calls.
16. It is wise to call the creditors in advance to find out who is in a position of authority so you can discuss what has happened at your church and how it will affect your bills.
17. A give-it-all offering at the end of the year to catch up on your bills will work.
18. Build up your church-wide soul winning night attendance.
19. Schedule a week of revival with a soul winning evangelist.
20. Have a big push for a fall or spring Sunday school attendance campaign.
21. Plan a big day for the spring and the fall.
22. Do not call your preacher friends and bemoan your situation.
23. Schedule a two-day conference with a successful and optimistic pastor.
24. Get advice from a seasoned veteran.
25. Cut back on your expenses immediately. Do not put this off until you dig a hole too deep to get out of.
26. If you have to lay staff off, do so now!
27. You must be careful about belaboring the problems.
28. A good, honest pastoral talk with your church would be helpful.

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