

Farewell. Farewell! Farewell?

(A Message to the Ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ)

(Preached on Saturday Afternoon, October 10, 2020)

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.”

(Matthew 23:15)

["Just when I thought I was out, they pull me back in!"](#)

I. Farewell.

“Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, saying ‘The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat: all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.’” (Matthew 23:1-4)

“But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.”
(Matthew 23:5-7)

“But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.” (Matthew 23:8-10)

“But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.” (Matthew 23:11-12)

II. Farewell!

3 Ways to Respond When People Leave Your Church

By [Dave Barringer](#) - July 13, 2016

“Reflect Jesus to people when they come to your church; reflect Jesus when people leave your church.”

“Weekly, calls come in from pastors wanting to talk about a variety of subjects. I welcome calls like that. Why? I want to learn and grow and

I think conversations with fellow co-laborers is a great avenue to let “iron sharpen iron.” I feel every interaction I have with a fellow minister is an opportunity for both of us to grow.

“One of the subjects that inevitably comes up is the struggle that comes when people leave the church.

“I’m not necessarily talking about people abandoning their faith. I’m talking about that moment when people decide to stop attending the church you pastor and attend somewhere else because your church community isn’t a fit for them.

“It’s a moment that can be incredibly difficult to deal with. I love people and I wish everyone could find their fit at our church. But I realize that isn’t realistic.

“Seven years ago, a very good friend told me that, minimally, 30 percent of the people who voted you in as the pastor would eventually depart and go somewhere else. Some will go because you didn’t turn out to be who they thought you were (expectations both realistic and unrealistic). Some left because of too much change or not enough change or because they didn’t see the change they wanted to see. Some departed because their hearts were too connected to previous

leadership styles and approach. Still, some left because of offense and frustration.

“Pastors, if there’s anything I can implore of you during congregational transitions, it’s this: Reflect Jesus to people when they come to your church; reflect Jesus when people leave your church.

“What does this look like? As a pastor, how do you approach people leaving because they didn’t find a “fit” at your church?

1. Bless them.

“If they’re courageous enough to leave in an honorable way AND let you know, you need to push past any hurt or frustration and do what I believe is the most honorable thing to do: Bless them.

“Offer prayer over them. Bless their search for a church community. Speak a blessing over their home. Offer to help them find a church. It’s rare people take me up on that, but my heart has to be for the kingdom more than my church or denomination.

2. Speak well of them.

“Shut your mouth. Shut down any gossip about them. Let the words of your mouth and the meditation of our heart be honorable to the Lord.

Just because they left your church community doesn't mean they departed the kingdom of God.

"Pastor, did you know _____ left the church?"

"Yep. We talked and had prayer."

"Pastor, I heard _____ left because of _____."

"Well, first, I choose to believe the best of _____. Second, stop talking about it. Third, tell the people you're hearing this from to stop talking about it. That's between _____ and God and we can't run our church community by gossip and assumption."

3. Respond well to them.

"I see people in the mall, neighborhood, social media, etc. who have left our church. Their choice of a church home doesn't determine if I like them personally or not. For some, our church wasn't the best fit for them, and that's OK. I've developed some great friendships with people in the community that didn't find their "fit" at our church. That's fine. That happens and it's not necessarily a bad thing.

“Don’t respond to people in a hurtful way just because they no longer attend your church. I wish I didn’t have to type that. Grow up and treat people with respect and kindness.

“Here’s some final thoughts to lend to you:

“Be merciful. I believe mercy is best illustrated as “velvet steel.” If someone encounters you, they experience the velvet: kindness, honor, respect. Yet, the steel prevents you from being a doormat. Know who you are in your identity in Christ.

“If I offended someone, I’ll be the first to ask for forgiveness, regardless of whether I feel they’re justified in their offense. It could have been a complete misunderstanding, but regardless, I offended that person and I should initiate asking for forgiveness.

“If someone is offended, they should be the one to initiate a connection. If I know about it (sometimes someone is angry and never tells me), I’ll try to connect with them. But he or she needs to take responsibility and step up to Matthew 18 the situation.

“Anyone telling me that “God is leading me away” will always get a reply: “I’m going to respect what you have personally heard from God.” Who am I to argue with what God is speaking to them, as long

as they're not going to a place of sin? (A reminder: Leaving your church isn't a sin.)

"I don't play politics. "If I do _____, will you stay?" When someone is departing from your church community, negotiating doesn't fix anything. It only temporarily pacifies the situation.

"If someone has experienced hurt and/or offense, my goal isn't to "keep" them, but help them into healing. If they stay, I want them healthy. If they still leave, I want them leaving healthy.

"If someone disagrees and wants to leave, I just ask that we agree to disagree. I just believe that we can embrace Jesus, not necessarily see eye-to-eye on every detail in life, and STILL be cordial with each other.

"I don't do exit interviews. That has been a place for me to get annihilated while empowering someone with the hammer to do it. They get to leave and I'm left picking up the pieces.

"Don't tolerate sinful practices. Gossip, slander and bitterness are not kingdom attributes. Again, reflect Jesus to people when they come to your church; reflect Jesus when they leave your church. Perhaps if we (the pastors) do a better job reflecting Christ during these situations, the parishioners will have the example to follow.

“My prayer over you is that God would give you abundant wisdom (James 1) as you traverse through this amazing opportunity to lead a local church community. I speak God’s blessing over you in handling both when people come AND when they leave.

“I believe in you, pastors. You are a tremendous gift to the kingdom.” (Barringer, Dave. “3 Ways to Respond When People Leave Your Church.” OutreachMagazine.Com, Outreach Magazine, 17 July 2017, outreachmagazine.com/features/18406-when-people-leave-your-church.html.)

III. Farewell?

“Just when I thought I was out, they pull me back in!”

“This line is spoken by Michael Corleone, played by Al Pacino, in the film The Godfather: Part III, directed by Francis Ford Coppola (1990).

“Let's keep this in the family, shall we? At the beginning of The Godfather: Part III, Michael Corleone has lived his life as the Godfather. He's the head of the Corleone crime family and he's done some not-so-nice things along the way ...

“So, it's sort of fitting that, in this movie, he's trying to make things right. Michael is in the process of becoming a legitimate businessman.

Remember, this is what he promised Kay he would do way back in *The Godfather* (Part I). That was nearly thirty years ago. Now, he's about to do a big deal that will take him out of the family business for good—a business he never really wanted to be part of in the first place. Of course, that's not turning out to be so easy.

“In this scene, Michael finds out that he's been double-crossed by his mafia buddies. They're determined to mess up his big move into legitimacy. And with his words—*‘Just when I thought I was out, they pull me back in!’*—Michael expresses his biggest fear. He'll never be able to escape this life. There's nothing he can do to get away from the things he's done and the sins he's committed.

“Right after uttering this line, Michael has a diabetic stroke and is hospitalized. That makes this one realization all the more powerful. This is what Michael has been trying to achieve his entire life. He wants to bring his family out of the darkness and figure out a new way forward. But the end is nigh and he still hasn't gotten it done—poor guy.” (“Quotes - Just When I Thought I Was Out, They Pull Me Back In!” www.Schmoop.Com, Shmoop University, 2020, [www.shmoop.com/quotes/just-when-i-thought-i-was-out.html#:~:text=This%20line%20is%20spoken%20by,Francis%20Ford%20Coppola%20\(1990\).](http://www.shmoop.com/quotes/just-when-i-thought-i-was-out.html#:~:text=This%20line%20is%20spoken%20by,Francis%20Ford%20Coppola%20(1990).))

IV. Hello!

“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:24)

“But when he sees his children, the work of My hands, in his midst, they will sanctify My name; indeed, they will sanctify the Holy One of Jacob and will stand in awe of the God of Israel. “Those who err in mind will know the truth, and those who criticize will accept instruction.” (Isaiah 29:23-24)

OUTLINE:

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WORSHIP:

[Give Me Jesus \(385\)](#)

Opening:

[Be Thou My Vision \(386\)](#)

Message:

[He Is Exalted // I Exalt Thee \(Medley\) | Sounds Like Reign](#)