

## 9 Traits of Church Bullies

*By Thom Rainer*

Church bullies are common in many churches. They wreak havoc and create dissension. They typically must have an “enemy” in the church, because they aren’t happy unless they are fighting a battle. They tend to maneuver to get an official leadership position in the church, such as chairman of the elders or deacons or treasurer. But they may have bully power without any official position.

Church bullies have always been around. But they seem to be doing their work more furiously today than in recent history. Perhaps this look at nine traits of church bullies can help us recognize them before they do too much damage.

1. They do not recognize themselves as bullies. To the contrary, they see themselves as necessary heroes sent to save the church from her own self.
2. They have personal and self-serving agendas. They have determined what “their” church should look like. Any person or ministry or program that is contrary to their perceived ideal church must be eliminated.
3. They seek to form power alliances with weak members in the church. They will pester and convince groups, committees and persons to be their allies in their cause. Weaker church staff members and church members will succumb to their forceful personalities.
4. They tend to have intense and emotional personalities. These bullies use the intensity of their personalities to get their way.
5. They are famous for saying “people are saying.” They love to gather tidbits of information and shape it to their own agendas. See my previous post on this one item.
6. They find their greatest opportunities in low-expectation churches. Many of the church members have an entitlement view of church membership. They seek to get their own needs and preferences fulfilled. They, therefore, won’t trouble themselves to confront and deal with church bullies. That leads to the next issue, which is a consequence of this point
7. They are allowed to bully because church members will not stand up to them. I have spoken with pastors and church staff who have been attacked by church bullies. While the bully brings them great pain, they have even greater hurt because most of the church members stood silent and let it happen.
8. They create chaos and wreak havoc. A church bully always has his next mission. While he or she may take a brief break from one bullying mission to the next, they are not content unless they are exerting the full force of their manipulative behavior.
9. They often move to other churches after they have done their damage. Whether they are forced out or simply get bored, they will move to other churches with the same bullying mission. Some bullies have wreaked havoc in three or more churches.

Church bullying is epidemic in many of our congregations. They must be stopped. In my article on Wednesday, I deal with the topic of preventing church bullying. In the meantime, let me hear from you.

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