



# Why Churches Die!

By Ken Ortiz

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Like people, churches age and grow old! Every one of us has visited churches that have seen better days; days when the worship was vibrant, the teaching was inspired, souls were saved, and faith was bold.

But over time the worship became predictable, the teaching formal, converts rare, and lethargy took over. On the surface things looked the same. But there was no longer a sense of God's power & presence!

The former "glory had departed." (1Samuel 4:21)

Why does this happen? The gravitational pull of human nature that corrupts a movement, into a ministry, into a machine, and finally a lifeless monument.

Every true work of God begins as a *movement*; the *outpouring of the Holy Spirit* that flows like a *tsunami*, picking up everything in its path and carrying it forward. No lone individual

can be credited with what happens. God is moving powerfully, spontaneously, simultaneously and wonderfully. On the surface it may look like confusion. Yet, there is orderliness. Souls are saved, lives are changed, miracles happen, love overflows, and joy erupts into worship. God is moving sovereignly in and through a group of people who are wholly surrendered to His will.

Eventually there arises the need to *organize* what God is doing. We identify leaders, choose a name, draw up charters and by-laws, buildings are purchased, and staff is hired. Almost overnight, the *movement* has matured into a *ministry*.

This is not bad, as long as *ministry* continues to *minister*. Yet invariably

over time there is a subtle shift. The *ministry* no longer exists only to *minister*, but also to perpetuate itself. The measure of success moves from *faith, hope & love*, to more tangible items like *bucks, buildings and bodies!* A good Sunday is no longer one in which the *Holy Spirit moves* in power and lives were changed, but one in which the *giving* was strong and the attendance was up.

That's when *ministry* metastasizes into a *machine*. Operational *efficiency* becomes more important than spiritual *effectiveness*. The value of the individual begins to diminish as the "whole" becomes more important than the "parts." Protecting the *institution*, its reputation and assets, is more vital than the welfare of people. "Sins" are covered up for the greater

good; humility is replaced by pride; power becomes more important than prayer; "truth" becomes selective and flexible; and loyalty to God become synonymous with loyalty to the organization.

Machines eventually stop working, and eventually become *monuments* to the past. In reality, "the glory has departed." (1Samuel 4:21). Loyal souls may continue to plug along, but without a continuous infusions of resources, it will crumble overnight.

Is this inevitable? No. But avoiding it requires the kind of personal honesty that prays, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and... see if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23,24). If we listen and repent, our faith will never grow old and He will continue to move.

Editor's Note: You can connect with Calvary Spokane Church on their social media community, The City, at <https://calvaryspokane.onthecity.org>. You can also check out their many resources available including podcasts at [www.calvaryspokane.com](http://www.calvaryspokane.com) or call their office at 509-467-2860 for more information

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