



7 Signs Something Isn't Right in Your Church

When something feels off, but you can't explain why

Something may feel... off.

Not obviously wrong. Not something you can easily explain.
But enough that you may have found yourself wondering:

- *Is this normal?*
- *Am I just overthinking this?*
- *Why does something that once felt so life-giving feel so heavy?*

If this feels familiar, you're not alone.
And there may be a reason it feels this way.



Maybe you've tried to ignore it.

Told yourself it's just a phase you can outlast –

– or assumed you just need to trust leadership more.

But the feeling hasn't gone away.

That kind of internal tension doesn't usually come from nowhere. It often comes from being in an environment where something has quietly shifted— even if no one is saying it out loud.

I wish someone had told me this sooner –

That it wasn't that something was missing –
but that **something important**
was being replaced.



Sign #1

Experiencing the Holy Spirit is replaced by information

What it looks like

Teaching may be strong, consistent, and even compelling – but it's primarily concerned with doctrine, belief, and knowledge rather than a vibrant, relational experience with God and others.

How you might feel

You may feel informed, but not transformed. You might understand more, but experience the Spirit's leading less. You may leave with notes, but not with a sense of joy or excitement.

Why it matters

Life in the Spirit was never meant to be replaced by a mere intellectual understanding of God. When this happens, faith begins to feel more like learning than living.

What scripture says

“We have received the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us.” 1 Cor. 2:12–13

“... the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” 2 Cor. 3:6

“For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.”
Rom. 8:14

Sign #2

Discernment is replaced by deference

What it looks like

The authority, interpretation, and outlook of church leaders become primary and cannot be challenged. Questions are discouraged or framed as a lack of spiritual maturity.

How you might feel

You may doubt your own judgment, feel like you need validation, or be hesitant to make personal decisions that may conflict with church norms and dictates.

Why it matters

Healthy churches develop your ability to hear and respond to the Spirit, not just to church leaders. When discernment is replaced, you lose the ability to recognize the truth with confidence.

What scripture says

“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth.”

John 16:13

“... you do not need anyone to teach you... his anointing teaches you about all things.” 1 John 2:27

“Do not quench the Spirit... test everything; hold fast to what is good.”

1 Thess. 5:21

Sign #3

Unity is replaced by uniformity

What it looks like

Diversity of opinion – even on secondary matters – is viewed as a threat and there is pressure to conform. Church policy disallows discussion of differences and calls it “disunity” or “divisiveness.”

How you might feel

You may feel internal conflict (cognitive dissonance) as what you are taught does not align with what you know to be true.

Why it matters

True diversity is healthy and allows for open and honest discussion. Demands for uniformity remove the opportunity for growth and authenticity.

What scripture says

“Accept the one whose faith is weak without quarreling over disputable matters... One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind.” Rom. 14:1–5

“My conscience is clear... It is the Lord who judges me.” 1 Cor. 4:3–4

“Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister?... Hold the conviction that you have as your own before God.” Rom. 14:10, 22

Sign #4

Equality is replaced by hierarchy

What it looks like

Authority becomes superiority and position, title, or gender determines value. Members are “equal” in theory but not in practice. Hierarchy is imposed on the home as well as the church.

How you might feel

You may feel frustrated as imposed limitations restrict you from leadership, decision-making, or using your gifts inside (or outside) the church.

Why it matters

Every believer has access to God and is gifted and called by him to do different things. Imposed hierarchy distorts that truth, limits the reach of the Gospel, and increases the chances of abuse. Scripture consistently levels status and elevates shared leadership, identity, and service.

What scripture says

“When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation.” 1 Cor. 14:26

“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” Eph. 5:21

“You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood...” 1 Peter 2:9

Sign #5

Cooperation is replaced by comparison

What it looks like

Other churches or ministries may be mentioned, but often in a critical way. There may be little partnership with other churches because members feel they are “right” or “the best” in some way.

How you might feel

You may begin to view other groups with quiet judgment or feel hesitant to engage with those at other churches. You may start to see your church as distinct – not just in identity, but in value.

Why it matters

The Church was always meant to function as a unified body. When the local church operates as an elitist country club, humility, shared mission, and an awareness of God’s work in the world are lost.

What scripture says

“...be knit together in the same mind and the same purpose.”

1 Cor. 1:10

“There is one body and one Spirit... one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all...” Eph. 4:4–6

“... we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body...”

1 Cor. 12:12–13

Sign #6

Compassion is replaced by correction

What it looks like

When someone is struggling, their pain is treated as a problem to fix rather than a person to care for. Negative emotions are reframed as sin. Rather than being offered presence and care for complex situations, people are given simplistic answers or instructions.

How you might feel

You may feel judged or unseen in your pain and continue to struggle with spiritual guidance that lacks sufficient depth or expertise (such as from outside trained counselors).

Why it matters

Compassion and empathy were never meant to be optional – they reflect the nature and heart of Christ. When correction replaces compassion, the safety needed for honesty and healing is absent.

What scripture says

“Mourn with those who mourn.” Rom. 12:15

“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” Gal. 6:2

“Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility...” Col. 3:12

Sign #7

Introspection is replaced by externalization

What it looks like

While problems are attributed to forces outside the church – culture or specific groups of people (e.g., liberals, feminists, the transgendered, etc.) – there is no willingness to acknowledge internal failures and little involvement with the community.

How you might feel

You may sense a growing disconnect between what is said about the outside world and the lack of meaningful engagement with it. You may notice that criticism is consistently directed outward while loving outreach is lacking. You may feel tension between what the Church is called to be and what you're seeing.

Why it matters

Jesus was called a Friend of Sinners and spent time with tax collectors and prostitutes. His mandate for the Church is to seek and love the lost – not to shun them or deny when injustice exists.

What scripture says

“Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy...” Psalm 82:3–4

“You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor’s eye.” Matt. 7:5

If any of these signs feel similar, it's worth pausing – not to panic or assume the worst, but to acknowledge what you're sensing. Many people assume that if they feel spiritual confusion, there's something wrong with their faith when it's actually the environment they're in.

I know it can be scary, but clarity is not the enemy of faith. In fact, it's often the beginning of healing. In that process, you are allowed to:

- *Ask questions*
- *Step back and reflect*
- *Seek wisdom and support*
- *Pursue spaces that are healthy and nurturing*

Just know that there is a way forward, and I'm here to help. If this resonated, here are a few possible next steps:

Stay Connected

[Sign up here](#) for more insights like this. I promise not to overwhelm you.

Talk it through

If you're trying to process what you've experienced, I offer private sessions where we can pray, reflect, and walk through your situation together. You can [schedule a time here](#).

No pressure, just an option.

With you in the process,

Michele