



The Autopsy of a Deceased Church

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December 5, 2017

“It is the church’s behavior, not just its beliefs that determine if a church is fulfilling its mission.”

- Reginald W. Sharpe Jr.

10 Reasons Churches Die:

1. **Slow Erosion** - “Growth may come rapidly, but decline is usually slow, imperceptibly slow” (Rainer, p.13). [Haggai 1:4-9](#)
2. **The Past is the Hero** - “Yes, we respect the past. At times we revere the past. But we can’t live in the past” (Rainer, p.21). [Philippians 3:14](#)
3. **The Church Refused to Look Like the Community** - “When a church ceases to have a heart and ministry for its community, it is on the path toward death” (Rainer, p.28). [Matthew 25:34-40](#)
4. **The Budget Moved Inwardly** - “When you conduct the autopsy of a church, you must follow the money. For where the money of the church goes, so goes its heart” (Rainer, p.31). [Matthew 6:21](#)
5. **The Great Commission Becomes the Great Omission** - “Thriving churches have the Great Commission as the center-piece of their vision, while dying churches have forgotten the clear command of Christ” (Rainer, p.40). [Matthew 28:19-20](#)
6. **The Church Became a Preference-Driven Church** - “The lifeblood of a healthy church is one that is more like the mind of Christ in the members’ attitudes. Sadly, the dying churches rarely had members who were so other-centered” (Rainer, p. 50). [Philippians 2:5-11](#)

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7. **Pastoral Tenure Decreases** - “It is self-evident that pastors and their leadership are vital to churches. The problem is that many good leaders are leaving churches before they reach their prime leadership years at a church” (Rainer, p. 55). [Exodus 17:10-13](#)
8. **The Church Rarely Prayed Together** - “When the church is engaged in meaningful prayer, it becomes both the cause and result of greater church health” (Rainer, p. 66). [Acts 2:42](#)
9. **The Church Had No Clear Purpose** - “The Philippian church members did not stop understanding their purpose. From the day the church started until the day Paul wrote the letter, they knew what they were supposed to do. So they lived the gospel and they shared the gospel” (Rainer, p. 75). [Philippians 1:3-5](#)
10. **The Church Obsessed Over the Facilities** - “Being a good steward of those material things that God has given our churches is good. Becoming obsessed with any one item to the neglect of His mission is idolatry” (Rainer, p. 80). [Matthew 6:19-21](#)