



## 5 THINGS YOU SAY

### THAT ANNOY YOUR EXECUTIVE PASTOR

BY RICH BIRCH



Executive pastors live at the intersection of vision and execution.

They spend their days trying to balance the immense call that God has put on the church and the limited resources your church has for making that vision a reality.

This tension creates an incredible amount of stress for executive pastors, and we shouldn't want to add undue pressure to these folks' lives.

Executive pastors lead from the second chair and are charged with pushing the mission forward. However, at the same time, they lead in submission to the lead pastor and potentially the board of elders or overseers of your church.

In some ways, **executive pastors are like air traffic controllers because they are responsible for lots of moving parts in the life of the church but have very little executional control.**

They are at the center of trying to figure out which ideas must be pushed forward and how to sequence the new projects with communications and various other demands.

Sometimes, church staff don't understand the function of the executive pastor's role and aren't sure how best to engage with them.

I want to help you by providing five things that you really should avoid saying if you want to help make your executive pastor's life more fulfilled. It's not so much about the words that are said but the attitude behind the words that you want to guard yourself against as you serve within the life of your local church. So here they are, five things you say that might annoy your executive pastor:

## "I'M NOT A NUMBERS PERSON."

Many people who get into ministry do so because they want to serve others. We love people and see ourselves as “people, people” and are distracted or frustrated by the system side of being a part of a growing church.

We can find ourselves frustrated with all the financial or “numbers” stuff that comes up.

Here's the hard truth that you need to accept as a staff member: **Spreadsheets are the language of leadership and scale.**

Translating what's happening in your ministry into numbers (not just financial numbers) will help your executive pastor get a clearer picture of what's happening within your area of ministry.

Every caring executive pastor is going to love the story about what happened last Tuesday night at your ministry event, but they'll gain a better picture of your long-term ministry trajectory if you're able to translate that into metrics. This kind of information helps everyone understand what's happening within the life of your ministry.

Take time to understand and unpack your ministry at a numeric level and your executive pastor will give you a big hug or maybe a high five! (When it's kosher to do that again!)

## "WOWZERS, I'M LATE ... AGAIN."

Punctuality is an important trait for staff who want to reach people and make a difference.

If you've got an appointment with anyone on your team, whether it be an internal staff member, a congregational member, a volunteer, or a donor, ensure that you're on time.

You may not be the kind of person who's naturally punctual. I have many friends who always run five minutes late to meetings and I've gone through seasons like that myself.

I have to remind myself that punctuality ensures team alignment. Showing up on time, or even a few minutes early, to meetings, appointments, and even Zoom calls is a way of showing your team and your executive pastor that you respect them, and you respect their time.

It also sets the mood right by everyone working toward showing up at the same time. **Punctuality is the first step towards team alignment.**

## "LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT THIS PROBLEM."

Executive Pastors are often very strategic thinkers and typically find themselves in these roles because they are comfortable being problem solvers in a wide variety of ministry areas.

They often possess lots of helpful advice and input for ministry areas regardless of their primary function in the life of their church.

However, don't just present problems to your executive pastor and ask for a solution. Come with your problem and several potential solutions and discuss a way forward.

Go out of your way to identify potential ways of moving forward. Don't just present negatives and wait for your executive pastor to turn them into positives.

Oftentimes, executive pastors will lead more with questions than with answers. **They will prefer to coach you towards finding solutions for moving beyond the problem.**

## "WHY DO THE PEOPLE IN THAT DEPARTMENT HAVE IT SO EASY?"

Stop complaining about people on the church staff.

Years ago, I remember hearing about a church that had an evaluation form that was filled out by new staff at the end of their first 90 days. The pastor of this church shared that a new staff member asked, "why is it that all the people on my team seem to hate all the people on that team over there?" Obviously, this church had some alignment issues and needed to work hard on building unity across their entire staff team.

Here's the deal. We want you to be passionate and excited about your area of ministry. We want you fired up about what it is that God's called you and your department to do. We are excited for your team to be passionate about their areas of ministry. However, if your passion crosses the line to the point that you find yourself in a competitive stance against other team members, the trust of your senior leaders, including your executive pastor, will erode.

**Church staff members who are consistently pushing the mission forward and cheerleading other departments are deeply respected and valued by executive leaders.** Find an opportunity to build up, not tear down, other team members as you lead your area with passion!

## "NOTHING."

Silence is the first step of a teammate's withdrawal.

Don't fall into the trap of pulling back from engaging with your team at church.

Lean in and engage in dialogue.

Don't be the silent person in every meeting who is never giving their input or pushing back on plans or dreaming of the future.

Silence is a sure sign that a team member is beginning to withdraw from the community. Your executive pastor spends a lot of time thinking about how they can build an engaging community culture for their staff team and they'll be concerned if they see you withdrawing from that community.

Lean in, they're looking for your input. **The reason why they have you on their team is that they value your place and want you to engage.** Bring everything you have to the role and they'll be excited that you're a part of what God is doing in the life of your church.

## ARE YOU AN EXECUTIVE PASTOR?

## HERE ARE SOME MORE RESOURCES TO HELP YOU.

Maybe you are an executive pastor, or you want to understand them better. We have some free resources for you. [Click to download this executive pastor help pack.](#) It includes two PDFs and three interviews designed to help executive pastors think through their role and grow in their development. Here at unSeminary, we love executive pastors and are consistently trying to find a way to help them grow in new ways. Here's what's included in this pack:

- **5 FRIENDS EVERY EXECUTIVE PASTOR SHOULD HAVE ON SPEED DIAL**

This PDF identifies five different people that would be good for you to have friendships with to help push the mission of your church forward.

- **6 SYSTEMS EVERY EXECUTIVE PASTOR NEEDS TO EVALUATE THIS YEAR**

This PDF gives you six areas to wrestle through how your church is doing and to evaluate how effective they are in pushing the ministry forward.

- **3 EXECUTIVE PASTOR INTERVIEW MP3S**

Also included in this pack are interviews with three best-in-class executive pastors: Kevin Davis from 2|42 Church in Michigan, Phil Taylor from Mosaic Church in Florida, and Abram Gomez from Cross Church in Texas.

[Click here to download these resources now.](#)