

# KINGDOM FESTIVAL GOD BLESS NATIONS SUMMIT

Kingdom Festival Pastors and Church Leaders Empowerment Summit  
RAISING KINGDOM CHAMPIONS LEADERS



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### RAISING KINGDOM CHAMPIONS LEADERS

1. Solid Ethics in Ministry
2. Dealing with increase in Deception and cults
3. Divisions and Church/ Denominational splits
4. Ministerial Succession and Retirements care of spiritual fathers and mothers of faith
5. Apathy and internal focus. "I have been in ministry for over twenty years, and I've never seen church members more apathetic and internally focused."
6. Staff issues. "I inherited staff from the previous pastor. It's not a good match, but I don't have the credibility to do anything about it."
7. Leading and keeping volunteers. "It's a fulltime job itself."
8. General time constraints. "I end every week wondering why I got so little done."
9. Getting buy-in from members. "I spend half my time developing a consensus from members about decisions from the mundane to the critical."
10. Generational challenges. "It seems like the older generation is determined to nix any new ideas or excitement from the younger generation."
11. Finances. "You can sum up our challenge in four simple words: We need more money."
12. Holding on to traditions. "I wish our members would put as much effort into reaching people for Christ as they do holding on to their traditions."
13. Criticism. "Some leaders in the church have appointed themselves to be my weekly critics."
14. Leadership development. "We miss too many opportunities in ministry because we don't have enough leaders ready."
15. Majoring on minors. "We spent an hour in our last business conference discussing the fonts in our bulletins."
16. Lack of true friends. "One of the toughest realities for me as pastor was the awareness that I have no true friends in the church."
17. Pastors Personal finances and Family
18. Pastors and missionaries in market place- Tent Making
19. Children rebellion and Inheritance
20. Inefficient administration.
21. Project failure.
22. Slow technology adoption.
23. Managing different personality types, ages, & professional backgrounds.
24. Hectic schedules & overwhelming workloads.
25. Challenge to missions and supporting missionary work
26. Ineffective delegation. To delegate well and ensure that everyone can "stay in their lane" churches can:
  - Use strategic church management tools that help staff work effectively and take responsibility for projects and department roles....
  - Create a culture of empowerment, where leaders are quick to encourage and empower staff and volunteers to lead out in different initiatives....
  - And give people the tools, training, and encouragement they need to succeed.
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- 26) Getting insight.
- 27) Financial management. To manage financials well, churches can:
- 28) Language acquisition. Of course it is important to learn the language so you can share with them. This takes time and effort. However, most ministers struggle with learning the language.
- 29) Not trained for the work they are doing. Can you imagine the frustration trying to do work you didn't get training for? Ministers who work in closed countries have to have a legitimate reason to live there. Often these missionaries go from one business idea to another until they find one that works.
- 30) Character issues. Anytime a person is in a pressure cooker situation, character issues will surface.

- 31) Team Struggles. Team dynamics in ministerial policies can make a missionary's work stressful and distract from the actual mission. Common struggles are disunity, lack of leadership, mismatched personalities and talents, unwillingness among members to compromise, and culture shock related stress.
- 32) Lack of financial support. Most missionaries need to raise financial support. Some sending organizations won't send a missionary until they are 100% supported; however, some will send before. This makes it challenging when a missionary has to continue to raise support while adjusting to a new culture, learning a new language, and working.
- 33) Lack of resources. Different from personal financial support.
- 34) Flexibility. You might hear that it's good to be flexible like a rubber band. One missionary friend put it this way, "a rubber band will eventually lose its elasticity or break. A missionary needs to be fluid."
- 35) Culture shock. If you have traveled or worked in a foreign country, you understand this. For a missionary it also includes downsizing of personal space, limited access to amenities like medical services, reliable utilities, and so on. Another cultural challenge is misunderstanding because of different cultural norms.
- 36) Disappointment. Anytime a person begins something new expectations are high. This is same for a missionary. Over time disappointment settles in. A missionary eventually has to either moderate their expectations or they become disillusioned. This is one thing that contributes to a missionary leaving the field before they see tangible results.
- 37) Isolation. Another common response I got was isolation. This happens because of a lack of ex-pats, infrequent contact with friends from home, and lack of longterm relationships. A missionary also suffers from spiritual isolation that can lead to a crisis of faith.
- 38) Marriage tensions and challenges. Take the challenges of marriage and intensify it manifold for a missionary couple serving overseas.
- 39) Parenting. Deciding how to educate, teaching social skills, finding friends, criticism from local culture, helping children navigate their own culture shock all make parenting challenging for missionaries in a foreign country.
- 40) Spiritual attack. Of course with the reality of spiritual warfare, the last thing the enemy wants is for a missionary to have success. Many of these on this list are caused by spiritual attack at some level.
- 41) Discouragement with results of witnessing, progress in churches, growth in converts, uncertainty about lasting ministry. Solution: It is God's work, not mine. "Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve" (Colossians 3:23-24).
- 42) Priorities of the missionary's commitment, time, opportunities, and time alone with God- Solution: Establish a plan of books to read, study, family, correspondence. "Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:15-16).
- 43) Necessity of language fluency in one or more new languages. Solution: Perseverance in study and practice in speaking. "And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed." (2 Corinthians 9:8-10).
- 44) Adjustments in working with people of another culture, thought pattern, viewpoint, and system of etiquette. Solution: Flexibility, adaptability, proper dress. "As a ring of gold in a swine's snout so is a beautiful woman who lacks discretion" (Proverbs 11:22).
- 45) Frustrating delays: seeking support, waiting for visa, seeking interviews with officials. Solution: Faith, patience. "But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. We have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will continue to do what we command. May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ" (2 Thessalonians 3:3-5).
- 46) Being tagged with the identity of a foreigner which represents wealth, a special political system, and a big power overshadowing small countries. Solution: By life and actions, emphasize your calling as an ambassador for Christ. "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20).
- 47) Sense of restriction on individual initiative, expression of talents, professional excellence, and implementation of new ideas. Solution: Find proper place in the Body of Christ and function in cooperation with other members, deal with things openly, teamwork, network, submission to leaders. "But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another. We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people. Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will

for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:12-22).

- 48) Insufficient funds for inflated costs, children's schooling, emergencies, and promotion of the work. Solution: Faithful stewardship of God's material deposit with us. News and prayer letters. "Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been (given in the churches of Macedonia, that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God. So we urged Titus that as he had previously made a beginning, so he would also complete in you this gracious work as well. But just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious work also. I am not speaking this as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:1-9).
- 49) Fulfillment of family responsibilities in demands of work, provision of needs, education of children, and times of separation. Solution: A balanced Christian life. Build joy of Christ in your family. Plan vacations and family times together. "Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them. Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart" (Colossians 3:18-21).
- 50) Spiritual exhaustion requiring encouragement, inspiration for ministry, personal devotion, and exemplary conduct. Solution: A desert place to be alone with God and His Word. Spend time in God's Word daily. "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity" (2 Peter 3:18).
- 51) Biblical Illiteracy. Biblical literacy is a huge problem in the American church, and it makes many of the challenges on this list all the more challenging. Quite simply, people in
- 52) Presence. Christians ought to be people of *presence*, connected to God and to one another through the inhabiting, unifying power of the Holy Spirit. But the 21st century world busies our lives and distracts us so that every moment pulls us away from presence. The church must reprioritize its vocation as presenters of God's *presence in the world*, and to do so we must cultivate habits and liturgies that create the space and contours for that presence to be felt and known.
- 53) Disembodied Tendencies. The trajectory of technology is away from incarnational presence and toward disembodied experience. We increasingly live our lives via screens, streams, apps, phones. Our relationships are digital. This exacerbates existing Gnostic tendencies (a cerebral rather than embodied faith) and subtly deemphasizes the crucial physicality of the church, the "body of Christ" in the material and not just theoretical sense. Churches should find ways to encourage physical gatherings, the practice of the Lord's Supper, meals together in neighborhoods, bodily movement in worship, shaking hands and hugging each other, whatever it takes! Anything to re-sensitize people to the fleshly reality of the church in the world.
- 54) Compartmentalization. We live our mediated lives via windows and boxes. We chat with multiple people at a time, post one fragment of our lives here and another there, consume visual media in one window and read the Bible in another. All of this makes it easier to fracture our lived experience into disconnected compartments, a process that wreaks havoc on our spiritual formation. Integrity is wholeness (integer = whole number), all parts of our lives integrated and reflective of the Lordship of Christ. Churches today must work extra hard to cultivate this.
- 55) Boredom. We are an antsy culture. Everything is fast-paced and harried; we can hardly remember which Netflix show we loved last month or which restaurant was the rage last year. We have short attention spans and get bored easily, and this poses a huge challenge to the church. The values of routine, tradition and stability that define the church are distasteful in our fidgety age. Churches are naturally tempted to use gimmicks and trendiness to solve this problem, but this is ill-advised. The tricky task of the church in the 21st century is to lead people to awe, wonder and worship without watering things down or constantly reinventing the wheel.
- 56) Temptation to Reinvent the Wheel. The boredom challenge leads to this challenge, to "rethink" church every couple years. The problem is endemic in American evangelicalism. It is exhausting to read the scores of books that come out every year that provide a new paradigm or prescription for a revived church.
- 57) Complexity. Related to our temptation to reinvent the wheel is the temptation to complicate Christianity and church life. We see this in the 345 definitive "definitions" of the gospel that various authors and theologians set

forth every year. We see it in the enormous staffs and array of programs that turn churches into bureaucratically complex corporations. Complexity is cumbersome. It impairs mission. Especially at a time when faithful churches will be increasingly exiled from mainstream culture, we need to become leaner and more nimble. We need to rediscover the beauty of simplicity, focusing on the core practices and historic sacraments of the church. The more complicated we make the church, the less countercultural she is.

- 58) Consumer Christians. The ubiquity of consumerism in late capitalism has fully infiltrated the church, to the extent that “church shopping” and “what I got from the sermon” are things we say without thinking anything of it. People go to Sunday services to “get something.” They choose churches that “fit them” and match their checklist of preferences, just as one would choose a car or a new pair of jeans. But churches must challenge rather than cater to this mentality. Church is a place where members of a body come together for purposes beyond themselves. It’s an invitation to join Christ in what he is already doing in the world, not an invitation for Christ to affirm our self-actualization.
- 59) The Temptation to Homogeneity. The consumerism of contemporary Christianity has unsurprisingly led to churches that are more homogeneous than ever. When we go to churches that fit us (how we look, talk and worship) we will naturally be surrounded by people who look, talk and worship just like us. But homogeneity is not the biblical ideal. The power of the gospel is that of unifying diverse groups of people, breaking down the walls of hostility that naturally divide us (race, class, culture, gender, music preference, whatever). At a time when social media allows us to curate feeds and surround ourselves with people who agree with us and confirm our biases, this work becomes even more difficult.
- 60) The “Authenticity=Brokenness” Fallacy. I wrote about this a few years ago and still believe it’s one of the biggest challenges currently facing the church. At the heart of it is an unbelief in change and a weak theology of sanctification, a problem that leads to claims of “this is just who I am” essentialism and immutability. Aren’t we a people of resurrection and hope? Isn’t the Spirit who raised Christ from the dead within us now? Our anemic belief in change is coupled with a fetishizing of brokenness, and it’s a toxic combination. Many Christians today are quite simply more compelled by sin (though we call it “brokenness”) than we are with holiness, and that is a significant problem the church must address.
- 61) The Idol of Autonomy. Little poses a bigger threat to the church in 21st century western culture than the pervasive mindset that individual people are the sole arbiters of their identity, morality and destiny.
- 62) Aversion to Commitment. We live in a culture that is commitment averse. Millennials are the FOMO (“fear of missing out”) generation, preferring to keep options open rather than committing to something or someone and foreclosing other possibilities.
- 63) Social Media. There are some positive things social media offers, but there are many things about it that pose challenges to the contemporary church. Chief among them is the challenge of *posturing*, a performative obsession that feeds pride and hypocrisy. But social media (and texting too!) also can complicate pastoral situations and make existing problems worse. The Need for Racial Reconciliation. The church should be no haven for racism, and yet too often the church has let racial wounds fester and prejudice (whether explicit or implicit) go unaddressed.
- 64) Gender and Sexuality. This is a vast area that encompasses a wide range of things (homosexuality, gender identity, marriage, divorce, egalitarian vs. complementarian gender roles, pornography, etc.), each of which could be its own category on this list. We are already seeing how this issue creates fragmentation within churches, denominations and parachurch organizations, and this will only continue. It will also be the primary issue that drives the cultural alienation of the church in the 21st century.
- 65) Religious Freedom. The days are numbered for churches to freely conduct their affairs according to traditional beliefs and practices on issues of sexuality and gender, without government interference. The recent Massachusetts state law, which forces churches to allow transgender people to use church bathrooms and shower facilities of their choice, is just the tip of the iceberg. Churches will need to disentangle from the government to the extent that they can (return to house-churches?), or else figure out how to deal with inevitable legal/legislative challenges.
- 66) Anti-Intellectualism. It has been 21 years since Mark Noll’s discouraging assessment in *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (that “there is not much of an evangelical mind”), and while progress has been made there is still a lot of work to do in combating anti-intellectualism in the church. Too many churches do not encourage intellectual curiosity, vibrant debate and healthy questioning. They offer simplistic and unsatisfying answers to huge questions and in so doing they foreclose a whole arena (the life of the mind) wherein God can be worshipped and holy wonder cultivated.

- 67) **Hyper-Intellectualism.** The other end of the spectrum is a challenge as well. As important as apologetics, theological training and rigorous rational defenses are for the faith, if our presentation of Christianity is entirely cerebral it is missing something. The church in the 21st century must embrace the *mystery* and *embodied* elements of Christianity, the experience of God rather than just the conception of Him. This means worship and church life will be messier, more emotional and more unpredictable than the rationalists would prefer, but it will be more powerful and I daresay more transformative.
- 68) **Distrust of Authority.** For many (very valid) reasons, younger generations today have a real distrust of authority. This makes church inherently challenging for them, not only because they have a hard time trusting leaders but (more importantly) they struggle with submitting fully to the authority of Christ and the authority of Scripture. Yet churches must lean into the “transcendent authority” of Christ, countercultural as that may be. As Russell Moore recently observed, “In an age suspicious of all authority outside the self, the appeal to a word that carries transcendent authority can be just distinctive enough to be heard, even when not immediately embraced.”
- 69) **Entanglements of Allegiances.** This has been a struggle for the church since her earliest days. In what sense does a person’s allegiance to empire or nation or some other secular community interact with their allegiance to Christ and his church?
- 70) **JOB-RELATED STRESS-** Stress is by far the largest challenge facing pastors today. While many factors contribute to stress, the three primary categories for pastoral stress include:
- **Finances:** Managing both church and personal finances, including income, debt, savings, and expenses.
  - **Relationships:** Handling conflicts, managing church staff, reporting to the board, counseling and caring for their flock’s spiritual health, as well as taking care of their own spouse and children.
  - **Time management:** Juggling work, family, emergencies, counseling, and personal time.
- 71) **FEELINGS OF LONELINESS & ISOLATION-** Leaders often feel alone and isolated, and pastors are no exception. These feelings can be caused by unattainable pastoral assignments, a lack of affirmation from church staff, conflict with church members, or a general lack of friends and peer network for support. Dealing with loneliness begins with setting aside time that is not work-related so they can pursue healthy activities and new friendships. Encourage them to seek out peer relationships, confidants, and mentors. Be sure your church knows and understands what their pastoral role is and is not, and avoid toxic relationships and conversations.
- 72) **POLITICAL & CULTURAL DIVISIONS-** One of the largest problems in the church today are political and cultural differences. Pastors often feel forced to choose between picking a side or staying silent, both of which are losing options. While there is no quick fix to this problem, there are thought-leadership articles on how pastors can deal with political and cultural tensions. For example, The Gospel Coalition published an article entitled *Why We Need the Church to Disciple Our Politics* by Matthew Hawkins. He proposes that pastors should address political issues from a biblical perspective: “Rather than *avoiding* politics for the sake of discipleship, might we try *applying* discipleship to our politics?”
- 73) **DECLINING CHURCH ATTENDANCE-** Church attendance is at its lowest level in U.S. history with the average church seeing 60 people attending each week. Many pastors whose churches survived COVID-19 have found that their in-person attendance has not bounced back to pre-pandemic numbers after reopening their doors.
- 74) **INEFFECTIVE DISCIPLESHIP MODELS-** Discipleship is crucial to each Christian’s spiritual journey, yet 39% of Christians are not involved in any form of discipleship. Part of the challenge pastors face is that old discipleship models are not as effective with their congregations today.
- 75) **DISCONNECTED DIGITAL TOOLS -** Today’s technology allows pastors to be more productive and reach more people than ever before—sharing content online, live streaming, group messaging, coordinating small groups and volunteers, as well as managing events. Most pastors want to focus on church ministry, not church tech. The biggest challenge to effectively using digital tools is learning how to use multiple platforms. Ideally, churches should use a connected, all-in-one solution built for pastors to better know, grow, and disciple their communities.
- 76) **FINANCIAL & ECONOMIC REALITIES-** Churches feel the impact of economic downturns. People facing inflation and recession have less to give to their church, so pastors have to make tough choices about cutting salaries, reducing church spending, and pausing ministry programs. Fortunately, there are practical steps pastors can take to prepare their churches for an economic slump. One of the best tools to ensure incoming donations stay strong is online giving. People can donate from anywhere at any time, set up recurring giving, and even cover any processing fees.

- 77) **BALANCING ONLINE & IN-PERSON WORSHIP-** Studies show that online services remain popular even after churches have begun to meet in person again. At the same time, pastors know that it's not always easy to easily to simultaneously run in-person and online worship services. Check out our free guide for engaging your church community online, Virtual church services: a how-to guide for engaging your church community online. It contains all the information you need for live streaming your worship services, creating a sense of community online, and encouraging generosity.
- 78) **DISTRACTIONS & DISCOURAGEMENT-** Pastors today have more tasks, communication, and job expectations to manage than ever before. This makes distractions and discouragement two of the most significant mental challenges in ministry today. Churches can rally around their pastors by offering encouragement, celebrating their accomplishments, and seeking practical solutions to reduce distractions. Pastors can help by being intentional with their schedules, willing to delegate auxiliary tasks, and creating a working environment that promotes encouragement.
- 79) **DEVELOPING LEADERS & VOLUNTEERS-** Two of the main difficulties pastors face are growing leaders and managing volunteers. While these challenges have been around since the beginning of the Church, pastors know that strong leaders and loyal volunteers are essential to a strong church. Beyond traditional leadership development programs and volunteer strategies, technology offers powerful solutions to managing volunteers, like group management, volunteer management, child check-In, and service planning tools. Your leadership teams will also appreciate the ability to have in-depth insights into who's attending, giving, volunteering, and engaging with your church.
- 80) Ministers often face perennial discouragement and loneliness which can lead to hiddenness and increased vulnerability to temptation.
- 81) It's hard finding community and encouragement by peers or mentors outside of the church – someone who can pour into pastors and care for our souls.
- 82) Challenges of living the word- There's a disconnect between living out personally and privately what we preach and espouse publicly.
- 83) Isolation is the root cause of a great many challenges that pastors face. Because of our role, pastors often can't or don't pursue authentic relationships of vulnerability and trust. This makes the other struggles we experience more damaging, because we often face them alone. There is a palpable loneliness that is intrinsically related to the profession and the stratospheric demands.
- 84) Friendships are a struggle. A true, deep, lasting friendship usually doesn't come from within a congregation, but that's where a pastor spends most of their time. Where are friends supposed to come from?
- 85) Pastors have strange jobs. There is no other job that I know of that is quite like being a clergy person. This makes us feel like others can't relate. Relationships with other pastors seem to be difficult, so we often don't end up with many (if any) healthy relationships in which we feel understood.
- 86) Developing leaders and volunteers.
- 87) Fostering connections with unchurched people.
- 88) People's apathy or lack of commitment.
- 89) Consistency in personal prayers.
- 90) Friendships and fellowship with others.
- 91) Training current leaders and volunteers.
- 92) Consistency in Bible reading not related to sermon or teaching preparation: 68%
- 93) Trusting God.
- 94) Relationships with other pastors.
- 95) Consistency in taking a Sabbath.
- 96) Stress.
- 97) Personal disciple making.
- 98) Confessing and repenting from personal sin.
- 99) Consistency exercising.
- 100) Avoiding over-commitment and overwork.
- 101) Challenging people where they lack obedience.
- 102) Time management.