

Releasing an Employee the Right Way

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I. Introductory Note about Firing an Employee

A. There are generally three reasons someone gets terminated:

1. They failed because of own personal failure.
2. They failed due to the Church's poor leadership.
3. They failed because of personal incompetence.

B. Regardless of the Reason, People need their dignity.

"Regardless of the reason for the release, treat people right and with kindness. You are in control and you still have a job; they have neither, so be kind."

--Dave Ramsey

C. Before Considering Firing Anyone Determine...

1. Has the church outgrown the minister, or the minister outgrown the church?
2. Who agrees the minister needs to be replaced?
3. What previous steps were taken to correct issues?
4. Would most agree this is God's timing for action?
5. What consequences should we consider if we act?
6. What consequences should we consider if we do not terminate?

7. Exactly what is the specific reason we will give for the release?

II. They Failed Due to Their Own Personal Failure

A. Several Good Reasons to Fire Someone Immediately...

- Stealing or other grossly unethical behavior.
- Insubordination or gross disloyalty to employer.
- Any type of sexual misconduct with a minor.
- Any proven and well founded affair.

B. The Process of Termination

- Seek wise counsel—“no surprises” rule with elders.

Critical Note:

1. Sex with a minor will have to be reported to the police immediately. Consult with your elders and an attorney.
2. If stealing is involved, talk to elders, an attorney and a police officer where possible.

- Do it in person.
- Do it gently, but be direct and firm.
- Do it without malice—grace is needed.
- Clearly state the reason for the termination and why it must occur.
 - If they offer to resign, allow them to do so.
 - If a spouse does not know yet, develop a plan to assist.
 - It is the fired employee’s task to tell the spouse, not yours.
- End responsibilities quickly, but politely.
- Settle an appropriate severance package that is gracious/but wise.
 - Difficult to imagine severance for stealing.
 - Severance might be “not prosecuting” as the gift.
- Offer to include counseling and continued care.

- Explain that the church is still “their church” as long as they desire.
 - Explain that it is time for a break from leadership but not from community.

III. They failed due to the Church’s poor leadership.

Note: You owe it to them to try and turn it around!

- First, give verbal correction and clearly state attitude and behavioral changes needed.
- Second, behind this give written correction and clearly write out the specific items and attitudes which need to be altered.
 - Be short and brief—do not say too much.
 - Be uncomfortable for everyone.
 - Attack the problem but not the person.
 - Reprimand sandwich: Praise/ problem/ praise.
 - Be private in your communication.
 - Be gentle yet do not apologize for what needs to be done.
- Make sure a Performance Plan is agreed upon and is being reviewed quarterly.

Performance Plan and Performance Review

- A solid Performance Plan will allow this to happen in the natural rhythms of the work place.
- A good process for Performance plans and review takes about 18 months to install with trust and buy-in.

- Make sure there are no surprises as the minister has not had a fair deal and deserved better from the church than was given.

IV. They failed because of personal incompetence.

- When reprimands fail to work realize that everyone begins to realize the inevitable.
- “Bad Apples” spoil the barrel and there is NO Value in sanctioning the incompetence of an individual at the expense of others.
 - Demand “Total Quality” and do not embrace mediocrity.
 - Life is too short to pay some people NOT to work.
 - Nothing demoralizes racehorses like a well fed donkey.

Step One (30 days 1st notice):

- Verbal correction and note in Performance Review
- Written correction presented with reprimand.

Step Two (30 days 2nd notice):

- Verbal correction and note in Performance Review
- Written correction presented with reprimand.
- Verbal correction given in a meeting with spouse present
 - Spouse usually does not know about the reprimands...

Step Three (30 days 3rd notice):

- Verbal correction and note in Performance Review
- Written correction presented with reprimand.
- This is pure grace and is done to go the extra mile.
- If agreed upon changes do not take place---Terminate!
- The minister being terminated has two choices... **(explain!)**
 - **High Road-** celebrate gifts, have a party and nice severance.
 - **Low Road-** make a scene and your reputation will be the only thing that suffers.