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## ARTICLE

### The Ten Greatest Challenges Facing The Church In 2026



By PNW Staff January 03, 2026

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In many churches, 2025 looked like a year of cautious optimism. Attendance rose in pockets. Bible sales climbed. Scripture engagement surged online, especially among the young. To some, it felt like the Church was finally turning a corner after years of decline and disruption.

But beneath the surface, something else was happening.

The same year that hunger for God quietly returned, pressure against biblical faith intensified. Technology advanced faster than discernment. Governments watched more closely. Doctrine softened. Persecution raged abroad while the West largely looked away. What appeared to be recovery was, in many ways, preparation for testing.

The Church does not enter 2026 in neutral territory.

It enters carrying unresolved tensions that will no longer remain theoretical.

#### 1. The Erosion of Biblical Authority--From Within the Church Itself

One of the most troubling developments of 2025 was not open hostility to Scripture, but its quiet reclassification. The Bible was increasingly treated as inspirational rather than authoritative--valuable for encouragement, but negotiable

when it conflicted with cultural norms.

Sermons avoided entire categories of teaching: judgment, sexual ethics, repentance, exclusivity of Christ. Scripture was quoted selectively, often framed with disclaimers or apologies. In some seminaries and denominations, biblical authority was openly redefined as "community-informed interpretation."

In 2026, this trend will intensify. Churches will be pressured to explain why they still believe certain passages apply at all. Once Scripture must defend itself before culture, it no longer governs belief--it merely participates in discussion.

A church that loses confidence in Scripture will not be silenced by force.

It will silence itself.

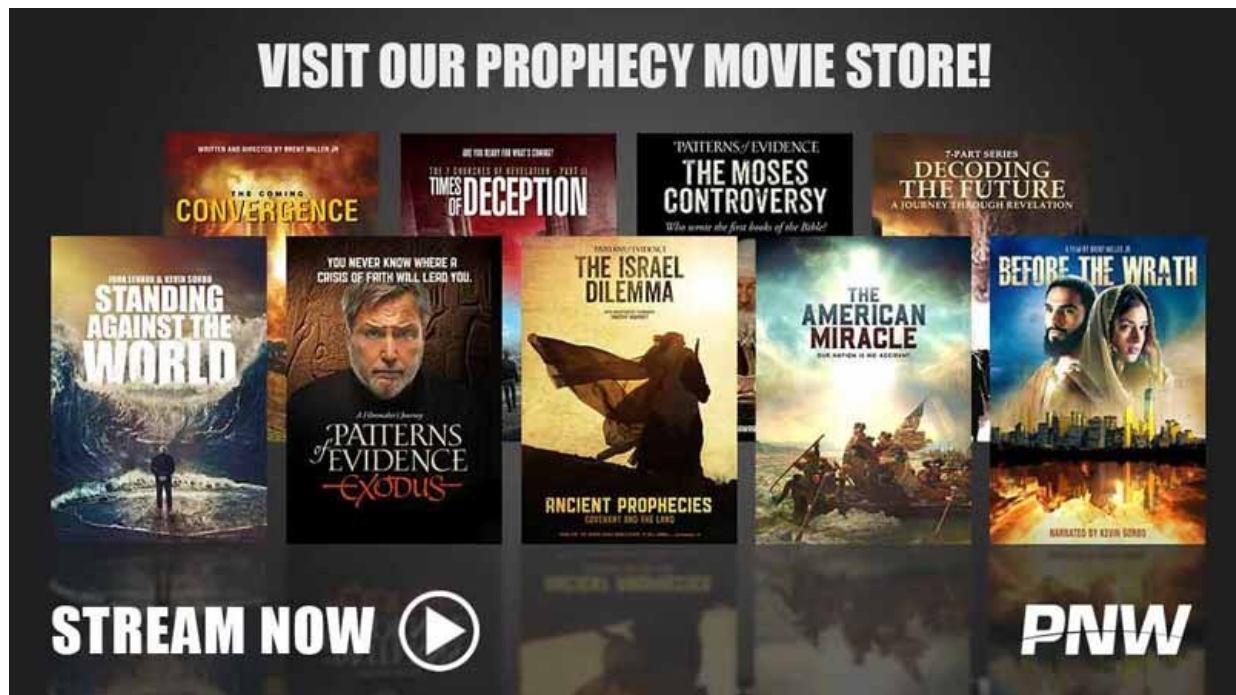
## 2. Government Monitoring, Surveillance, and the Quiet Redefinition of Acceptable Faith

In 2025, Western governments increasingly expanded digital monitoring under the banners of safety, misinformation control, and extremism prevention. Financial transactions, online speech, and organizational activity became easier to track, analyze, and flag.

While churches were rarely targeted directly, the framework was built. Beliefs on marriage, gender, and life were increasingly categorized as "potentially harmful," placing biblical conviction closer to regulatory concern. Surveillance does not begin with punishment--it begins with observation.

In 2026, churches may face scrutiny not for criminal behavior, but for ideological alignment. Banking access, nonprofit status, platform visibility, and even insurance coverage could become contingent on compliance. The greatest danger is not persecution--it is preemptive obedience born of fear.

When the state begins to define which beliefs are acceptable, faith becomes conditional.



## 3. Doctrinal Compromise Disguised as Love and Progress

2025 offered no shortage of examples of doctrinal compromise framed as compassion. Churches hosted drag-themed Christmas celebrations. Others removed references to sin or repentance from liturgy entirely. Some openly rejected biblical teaching on sexuality, hell, or salvation while still calling themselves Christian.

These changes were not presented as rebellion, but as moral growth. Dissent was labeled harm. Faithfulness was reframed as exclusion. Over time, doctrine was not debated--it was replaced.

In 2026, this trend will sharpen. Churches that hold historic Christian teaching will increasingly be portrayed as unsafe spaces. Pastors will be pressured to affirm what Scripture forbids, or risk public backlash and institutional consequences.

Love without truth does not liberate.

It disorients.

## 4. Cultural Exhaustion and the Temptation to Go Silent

By late 2025, many churches were simply tired. Years of cultural conflict, political volatility, and social upheaval left leaders weary. Silence began to feel like wisdom.

But silence is not neutral. It shapes disciples just as surely as teaching does.

In 2026, exhaustion will tempt churches to avoid difficult topics altogether. Yet congregations formed without clarity will be unprepared for pressure. Retreat does not preserve unity--it postpones reckoning.

A Church that refuses to speak eventually forgets how.

## **5. Fragmentation Within Christianity Itself**

2025 exposed deep fractures within the Church. Social media rewarded outrage over restraint. Leaders attacked one another publicly. Disagreements escalated into accusations of heresy, betrayal, or cowardice.

The result was not clarity, but cynicism.

In 2026, continued fragmentation will weaken the Church's public witness. A divided body struggles to speak with moral authority. Unity does not require uniformity--but public hostility corrodes trust and confuses truth.

A Church that consumes itself leaves little light for the world.

## **6. Youth Awakening But Needing Discipleship**

One of the most hopeful signs of 2025 was the surge in young people engaging Scripture. Bible apps climbed. Churches reported first-time visitors seeking meaning amid cultural instability.

But curiosity is not formation.

In 2026, without intentional discipleship, this hunger may drift into shallow spirituality, political faith, or emotional burnout. Young believers drawn by crisis must be rooted in theology, Scripture, and discipline--or the moment will fade.

Awakening without grounding creates volatility, not revival.

## **7. Technology as a Dangerous Substitute--or a Powerful Servant**

Technology accelerated dramatically in 2025. AI-generated sermons, automated discipleship tools, livestream-only churches, and visually driven worship experiences became commonplace.

The danger is substitution. When efficiency replaces formation, depth erodes. When algorithms shape theology, the Gospel becomes content rather than truth. Technology can flatten faith into performance and consumption.

Yet technology is not the enemy. In 2025, digital tools also spread Scripture globally, amplified underground churches, connected persecuted believers, and drew seekers who would never step into a sanctuary.

In 2026, the question will not be whether churches use technology--but whether technology serves theology or replaces it.

Tools can extend the Gospel.

They must never redefine it.

## **8. Escalating Christian Persecution Abroad--and the Global Warning It Sends**

Nigeria remained one of the deadliest places in the world to be a Christian in 2025. Churches were attacked, pastors kidnapped, villages destroyed, and believers murdered with little international attention. This was not sporadic violence--it was sustained persecution.

What was most alarming was the global silence.

At the same time, antisemitism surged worldwide--on campuses, in protests, and across digital spaces. Jewish communities faced threats, vandalism, and intimidation. The connection is clear: hostility toward biblical faith is no longer hidden.

In 2026, the Church must recognize that persecution abroad is not distant--it is instructive. Violence begins where belief is dehumanized. Legal pressure often follows where violence is tolerated elsewhere.

Ignoring persecution dulls discernment.

## **9. Leadership Burnout and the Quiet Collapse of Shepherds**

Behind outward growth in 2025 was a hidden crisis: exhausted pastors carrying impossible expectations with little support. Cultural hostility, legal uncertainty, and constant scrutiny drained resilience.

Many simply endured.

In 2026, endurance without restoration may give way to collapse--moral failure, emotional breakdown, or abandonment of ministry altogether. A Church that celebrates growth while neglecting its leaders will eventually lose both.

Healthy churches protect their shepherds.

**10. Fear of Man Replacing Fear of God**

This is the thread running through every challenge.

In 2025, many churches knew what Scripture taught but chose silence to avoid backlash. What began as caution hardened into habit. Over time, obedience was postponed for safety.

In 2026, the cost of faithfulness will rise. The Church will face moments where obedience carries consequences. Fear of man produces retreat and compromise. Fear of God produces courage and clarity.

Only one sustains the Church.

**A Different Kind of Year Ahead**

The challenges facing the Church in 2026 are not signs of collapse. They are signs of exposure.

Comfort is ending. Neutral ground is shrinking. The Church will not be judged by its intentions, but by its convictions under pressure.

The future will belong not to the loudest churches--but to the clearest ones.

Not the safest--but the faithful.

And the time to prepare for what lies ahead this year is now.

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