

## **DISCOURAGED PASTORS**

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*"And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding" Jer. 3:15.*

When I was a lad my greatest hero was my pastor. No Old Testament child ever stood before Moses with any more awe than I before my pastor. He was my example, my hero, and my best friend. I hung on to his every word and patterned my young life after his Biblical preaching. My young heart was filled with reverential appreciation and a willingness to follow without question or complaint. Such was the attitude of most church members 50 years ago. The pastor was the man of the hour and the respected leader in the community. I have lived to see the disturbing change that has risen up against the faithful servants of God. They are mistrusted, lied about, criticized, misused, hounded and the most "bashed" profession on earth. I want you to examine some of their greatest sources of discouragement. I have preached over sixty five years in their churches and know their problems.

The greatest discouragement is **APATHY AMONG THE CHURCH MEMBERS**. Apparently it was a problem from the beginning. In Jer. 2:32 God lamented, "my people have forgotten me days without number." It is heartbreaking to see how many professing believers simply do not care. The church is reluctantly a part of their life but the enthusiasm and priority for church things is missing. It has been submerged under all the earthly things they have allowed to become first. One can be so earthly minded they are no heavenly good. When a pastor constantly is battered by a barrage of excuses, poor attendance and little support, it is devastating. How can he build a fire when no one wants to be warmed? His heart can burn with zeal and excitement over the potential around him only to be greeted by the "ho hum" of status quo members. The constant dripping of their unconcern slowly moves him toward discouragement and despair. If a request to

candidate arrives when he is in such a state it is not hard to figure what will happen. He may go to his study to pray but his wife will go to the bedroom to pack. Apathy is the hardest thing a pastor faces today.

Pastors face a **DIRTH OF RESPECT and a BREAKDOWN OF TRUST**. I sense this everywhere on the part of the children of God. Since the exposure of the TV ministers of deceit and the emergence of cult phonies it seems all men of God have come under closer scrutiny. Your pastor deserves your respect and trust as he seeks to lead you in service and worship. He has nothing in common with that bunch. Scripture is very clear as to how you should treat your pastor. "We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves" 1 Thess.5:12-13. The pastor should be held by the congregation on a very high level as the undershepherd of the flock. We have lost a whole generation of children that have sparse respect for the pastor, for they were not taught this Bible command. The phone and the dinner time gossip mill has largely turned our youth away from pastoral respect. The most wounded teens are those who have been bounced from church to church by parents who couldn't get along with the pastor. The Bible is very clear. "Obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" Heb. 13:17. Board run churches or stubborn family rulers are often sources of great discouragement to good pastors. The Bible gives pastoral office first place. Deacons are to be pastors assistants and not pastors resistance. Suspicion, debate, stubbornness, refusal to change and pride have always been problems to a pastor. The statement, "We have always done it this way," has been a barrier in many a church. The pastor must offer loving, Biblical leadership which in turn will earn the respect and trust of the flock. Scripture teaches "that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" I Cor. 1:10. Such respect and trust between pastor and

congregation coupled to the power of God ensures the gates of hell cannot destroy the church.

Further heartache comes from **THOSE WHO REFUSE TO OBEY THE PASTOR**. We cannot escape the clear admonition to "Obey them that have the rule over you" Heb. 13:17. We fathers are to be the head over our earthly family. The pastor is the head of the church family. Because of pride many families refuse to obey the Biblical discipline of the pastor. Remember, "Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom" Prov. 13:10. Some members obey until a pastor's advice runs contrary to their desire. Some parents, amazingly, resent Biblical warnings about the revealing apparel or worldly music they allow in their family. "Duh" What sayeth the Bible? It is hard for a pastor to shrug his shoulders and watch some families' self destruct. Most will willingly follow the advice of a dentist or a doctor but often refuse Biblical correction and proven direction. Again Heb. 13:17 reminds pastors "they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief." The best sermons come from the pastor who senses the backing of the members of the church. Anything else will be unprofitable. Churches are seldom hurt by the forces without but from friction and disobedience from within. The Godly believer will find a church with a faithful pastor he can follow and obey. Stubborn refusal to be led has caused many a pastor to move on. That is tragic for the rebellion and refusal to obey is still there to assault the next pastor.

Your pastor can become discouraged by **A LACK OF LOVE**. Remember, you are told to "esteem them very highly in love" I Thess 5:12. In one church I followed the pastor to the pulpit to be introduced. As he stepped up, every kid in the auditorium jumped up and shouted, "He's my pastor and I love him." I was thrilled at the demonstration of love they offered him. We must teach our children by example to love the man of God. They can be taught to love him and express it repeatedly. Parents should really work at this and give it great priority. You will listen to someone you truly love. Love for your pastor should be often voiced and demonstrated. Go beyond the

usual comment at the door Sunday after service to a number of planned ways to show your love and that of the family. You cannot "overlove" a pastor. In order to gain love one must give it. Let me encourage you to choose every way possible to assure your pastor of your love. The glare of someone's criticism will be softened by the kind words and deeds of your affection. Please, encourage your pastor with repeated proof of your love and loyalty to him as the man of God. He needs it and deserves it. His sermons will be better and Gods love will shine more brightly on your family.

Men of God are further hindered by **A LACK OF CONGREGATION REVERENCE**. Today's church services tend to lean further toward entertainment than worship. In Hebrews 12:28 we are clearly instructed to "serve God acceptably with reverence and Godly fear." Teach your children the importance of the worship service and carefully monitor their actions. The church should not be a playground. Use the nursery for your little ones so they will not disturb others around you. Require your older children to sit up, not to bring toys, and to truly listen to the sermon. Teens can take notes but should not write notes and quip comments to each other in the meeting. Parents need to regulate where they sit and be able to observe their actions. Try refusing them Sunday dinner unless they can state 3 points of the pastor's sermon. Wow, how mean can I get? Seriously, it will help to show them the importance of gleaning from the messages preached in their presence. When someone prays, all should pray. Special music should add to the spirit of worship and be listened to prayerfully. Most of us have a lot to learn about worship. Your pastor can lead in worship if your attitude is one of worship.

Pastors can be further hurt by the **RARITY OF TOTAL DEDICATION**. The scientist must see some successful experiments. The doctor must see his talents and medicine working. The lawyer must be winning some cases. The man of God encouraged by the promises of the Word, should be blessed in seeing his efforts producing fruit. Nothing discourages like the "flash in the pan" brief experiences among some members. I have

often had some real spiritual young man pointed out as a blessing to all. Pastors rejoice in these but they are so few. Romans 12:1 cries, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." This promise is not for the few but for every child of God who wants to be used. A farmer who prepares the soil and sows diligently watches for fruit. It is discouraging to get little produce after many hours of labor. Don't leave your pastor wringing his hands in the middle of the church garden because so little of the seed sown brings forth fruit. Honor his labors by growing and flowering your very best. God must have you all or he will not use you at all. The pastor's trophy case should be filled with many who prove the effectiveness of his labors and the power of the Lord.

Often a man of God suffers a **LACK OF APPRECIATION**. He and his family must never be forgotten in their special times. Birthdays, anniversaries, and other special milestones should be noted and celebrated. Once again it is impossible to "over love" your pastor and his loved ones. You are told to remember "without ceasing" your pastor's "work of faith and labor of love" I Thess 1:3. He does so many things for the families of his church each year which are sadly taken for granted. Give him some parties, perhaps send he and his wife to the Holy Land and be sure they get away for some paid vacation. Don't make him pay the pulpit supply. One must be sure a pastor can get out from under the load occasionally. Appreciate his hospital calls and counseling and all the errands he often runs for church folks. Never take a pastor for granted. Bathe he and his family with personal expressions and church appreciation. It will be returned many fold in better messages and longevity from the man you love. He ought to be able to serve you with joy. Great appreciation will help.

Many pastors struggle because of **INADEQUATE FINANCES**. It often is necessary for a pastor to work at a secular job as a new church is getting started. This short time overload he will bear to get things started. As soon as possible the man of God

must be allowed to labor full time for your church which should well support him. The church must be sensitive to the growing needs of their pastor and his family. The only time I almost punched a deacon was when one said, "we keep our preacher poor so he won't get a big head." Boy was I tempted! Every working person loves to have a raise and the encouragement of more finances that represents a job well done. Your pastor works 24 hours a day and is never able to fully relax at the end of that day. His hourly wage can never catch up with his hourly commitments. He needs a generous salary plus benefits. Cover his insurance and housing allowance. Put him in a decent car and give him a gas allowance for his visitation. Deacons should assess needs yearly and raise his salary as an encouragement for a job well done. One pastor had to use all the meager salary the church gave for the college bill of his son. He and wife had to seek out extra work to keep food on the table. This detracts from his availability to do a full job of preparation and prayer for his preaching. If his wife works for the church, pay her. I hope you won't get a coronary but a pastor should make double the pay of the overall average of the workers in the church. He is to be "counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine" I Tim. 5:17. One cannot pay a faithful pastor too much as he labors with all his heart and strength for you and your families. Don't force your pastor to leave the ministry because he cannot make ends meet. Remember, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And the laborer is worthy of his reward" I Tim. 5:18. Poor finances cause hundreds of pastor each year to give up the battle. Don't let it happen to yours!

Another problem faced by the pastor is the **SHORTAGE OF WORKERS**. An ideal church is one whose members are "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" 1 Cor. 15:58. The pastor is to be the overseer but not an all doer. He simply cannot do all the things that need doing in a church. Each member has a talent and should divide up the responsibility of work around the church. A shortage of choir members, irregular board meeting attendance, unfaithful Sunday school teachers and lazy members all add to the pastor's daily load. Members should take

pride in pitching in and doing whatever needs doing. Sharing the work lifts the load upon the few and gives all the members a sense of this being "my church". Graduate from the Sunday morning do nothing crowd to active participation and "be ye doers of the word and not hearers only" James 1:22.

Your pastor also feels the load of **COMMUNITY PRESSURE**. He knows the admonition "let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" Gal. 6:9. Still there are some areas that are extremely hard to pastor a church. The skeletons of past church battles and old church squabbles often have spilled out into the community. People are slow to forget and if a few disgruntled ex-members wag their tongues, the neighborhood can be poisoned against the church. Some churches are in dying areas or such small towns that the potential for increasing membership is not there. Sometimes local laws and civil requirements further hinder the growth of a church and discourage the pastor. It is never easy to fly like eagles when surrounded by a world of buzzards.

Lastly, a pastor can suffer from **PERSONAL BURNOUT and PROBLEMS OF ILL HEALTH**. He must remember the promise, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" II Cor. 12:9. However the demands of the pastorate never seem to end. His family needs his love and daily leadership. Someone always is in need of a hospital visit and counseling sessions always loom. The business meeting is soon to come and all must be ready. Sermons must be researched and given with freshness after hopefully hours of prayer and study. A pastor will tend to forget all the victories and be weighted down by the problems of the church. This constant pressure can cause human breakdown and disease takes over. It's hard to study with a throbbing head or backache. A stomach ulcer or a failing heart and more serious body hindrances can drain the man of God. He can become filled with misgivings and question marks about his future service for the Lord. Old warriors hate to lay down their weapons and leave the battle to others. An older pastor may have to shift gears

and proceed at a slower pace but the wisdom of his many years will offset the change of pace.

I was once asked what I thought of preaching as a profession. I replied, "To me it is not a profession but a passion." I am sure most God-called men feel the same. In one great old time battle Aaron and Hur held up the hands of Moses as the battle progressed. Victory came because they stood by him and shared the load. You must do the same with your own dear pastor. Stand beside him in the final battles of the church age and together the victory will be ours.