

6 Simple Ways To Bless Your Pastor

According to just about every stat I hear, pastors hate the ministry, feel miserable, and would get out of the ministry if they could because being in the ministry is hurting their families. You've probably heard these statistics at a pastors' conference. So, a few years ago, we decided to do a crazy thing – we actually asked pastors.

What Does the Research Really Say?

We found a different picture when we actually talked with the pastors. There is discouragement and loneliness, but when 98 percent agree it is a privilege to be a pastor, we also know there is a great honor and reward that comes along with being a pastor.

Yet, more than half (55 percent) also agree with the statement "I find that it is easy to get discouraged," and 55 percent say being in pastoral ministry makes them feel lonely at times. It makes sense, doesn't it? Being a pastor is no cakewalk. It's more than writing sermons and having coffee with people. It's doing funerals of toddlers; it's counseling adulterous couples; it's praying for a mother who was just diagnosed with breast cancer; it's working on cost-efficient building plans. Pastoring the people of God is hard work; it's a high calling for a reason.

However, while leading the local church does take a toll, most pastors feel rewarded in their work.

Nearly 8 in 10 pastors (79 percent) disagreed with the statement "Being in ministry has had a negative effect on my family." The study found that 18 percent of pastors have more than 10 close friends in their congregation. In addition, 16 percent have 6 to 10 friends, 38 percent have 3 to 5 friends,

10 percent have 2 friends, and 4 percent have 1 friend. But 12 percent of pastors have no close friends in their congregation. As you can see from our research, not all pastors are depressed and lonely.

Many pastors love their jobs and have plenty of friends – they aren't lonely or depressed at all. But many are. The high calling of pastoring the local church is emotionally, spiritually, and even physically stressful at times. So what can we do? How can we support the leaders of our local churches?

How can we show them our appreciation and encourage them as they fulfill the calling the Lord has given them?

1. Pray for them.

What better way is there for you to uplift your pastors and church leaders than through approaching the throne of grace with confidence? The Lord hears the prayers of His people, and the Lord cares for the leaders of His people. Take time regularly, each day even, to pray for the men and women on your church staff. Pray for their emotional well-being, their physical strength, their spiritual wellness, and any specific needs you know. This is definitely the simplest and perhaps most impactful way you can support your church leaders. Before you do any of the following, be sure to pray.

2. Write them encouraging letters.

I love receiving encouraging letters from people, especially from those in the churches I've pastored. Being approached after a sermon and hearing how the Lord convicted or encouraged people through the Word is great. I love receiving texts too. But letters of encouragement, especially handwritten ones, are true treasures. I actually save them in a file labeled Encouragement. What should you write? Thank your leaders for their time outside the typical nine-to-five workday. Share some Scripture that may be encouraging to them.

Tell them about how the Lord has been using their ministry to make you more like Jesus. Write about how you saw a friend come to Christ. Your pastors and church leaders will appreciate anything encouraging.

3. Serve in the church.

Churches are always looking for more volunteers. Willing hands and warm hearts are so needed in the local church, especially when it comes to children's ministry or nursery help. How can you encourage your church leaders by serving? Spend a couple of months being a greeter. Sign up to be on the monthly rotation for parking lot duty. Volunteer to hold and pray for babies while their parents worship in the sanctuary. Any service you offer will be helpful for your church leaders. Simply ask where help is needed and be willing to be a faithful servant.

4. Give generously.

Giving is usually a pretty sensitive topic in church, isn't it? The pastor doesn't want to appear to be campaigning for a higher salary, and the church is sometimes wary to give more than is comfortable. Pastors aren't in the ministry for the money, or at least I hope they're not – they will be sorely disappointed! You can show your appreciation for your pastors and church leaders by giving generously and viewing your gifts as an act of worship, not merely ministry maintenance.

5. Encourage their families.

We've already seen the toll leading a church can take on the pastor, but often, the pastor's family feels the toll of ministry as well. Occupational ministry is a family affair, even if the pastor is the only family member working in the church. Late nights, working weekends, phone calls in the middle of the night – the demands of ministry affect more than just the one in the role. Encourage the families of your church leaders in much the same way you encourage your church

leaders: prayer, notes, and acts of kindness.

6. Speak well of the church.

One of the most discouraging parts about leading the people of God is hearing them talk badly about others in the church. Don't gossip about the bride of Christ. The body of Christ is a wounded body because it is made up of wounded people. Don't add salt to its wounds. Speak of the bride of Christ as you would like someone to speak of your spouse.

Pastors, what are some other ways you would like to be encouraged?

Churchgoers, what are some other ways you have encouraged your pastors? {eo}

Chris Martin and Ed Stetzer originally wrote this for LifeWay's Mature Living magazine, published back in October for pastor appreciation month. They have been meaning to post it to the blog for a while, as they think it's important to encourage your pastors and other church leaders.