

All the Pastors I Admire Share These Qualities

Read Time: 4 Minutes 31 Seconds

I've never been a member of Pastor Ed Russo's church in Wesley Chapel, Florida, but I've watched his ministry for years, and he has become a trusted mentor. While I was visiting him this week, my appreciation for him grew as I observed how New Life Church is thriving.

I feel the same way about David Cannistraci in California; Chad Everett in Illinois; Jeff Dail in North Carolina; Quentin Beard in South Dakota; Leon Bell and R.J. Wynn in Alabama; Chris Palmer in Tennessee; Chris Maxwell in Georgia; Roque Santiago in Pennsylvania; Luis Roig in Puerto Rico; and Grant Foster, Kent Davis and Antione Ashley in Florida.

October is Pastor Appreciation Month, and I've been reminded how much richer my life is because of the pastors who have inspired, encouraged and challenged me. I can't name them all!

But I've watched them carefully, and I've noticed common qualities that have made them successful, Christlike leaders. I compiled this list of the characteristics of leaders who are truly worthy of double honor:

1. Good pastors don't treat people like projects. Many leaders are so caught up in their heavenly vision that they view people like pawns to achieve their dreams. If you don't love and respect people, you will run over them. Learn to value people by offering encouragement, affirmation and rewards for service. When Paul said goodbye to the elders of Ephesus, they wept and embraced him because they knew he genuinely loved them (see Acts 20:36-38). Love people; don't use them. If you treat them like cogs in a machine, they won't feel sad when you leave!

2. Good pastors are not micromanagers. Can you imagine if Nehemiah tried to rebuild the crumbling walls of Jerusalem alone? Yet some leaders try to manage multiple projects rather than delegating the work to people who have the skills and the passion to achieve a common goal. Stop thinking you can do every job better. Help each team member find their place “on the wall” where they can work effectively. If you never take the time to train others, they will eventually go where they are appreciated—and you will burn out.

3. Good pastors never focus on their critics. All leaders receive negative comments from armchair quarterbacks and petty people. Get over it—this is just one of the many occupational hazards of ministry. Never become obsessed with what people are saying behind your back. Their words are like the buzzing of insects; what Sheila told Ralph after hearing Wanda’s criticism of your sermon will not affect you. Keep your heart focused on Jesus and let the sound of your praise crush Satan’s accusations.

4. Good pastors surround themselves with wise counselors. Some leaders jump from one big project to the next, jerking their church or organization to the left and then to the right as if they don’t really know where they are going. These erratic leaders never submit their ideas to others for accountability—or they surround themselves with yes men who rubber-stamp every foolish idea. Proverbs 11:14 (NASB) says, “Where there is no guidance the people fall, but in abundance of counselors there is victory.” Ask wise advisers to pray with you about your plans.

5. Good pastors never avoid confrontation. Every ministry will develop problems. But a good leader will see a problem when it first buds and take the initiative to correct it. Leaders who fear confrontation will let things fester until the problem spreads like a poisonous vine that eventually chokes the life out of the ministry. When the apostle Paul stepped in to correct a problem in the Galatian church, he warned them: “A

little leaven leavens the whole lump" (Gal. 5:9). Never assume that a problem will "take care of itself." Have the courage to deal with it!

6. Good pastors know how to stay recharged spiritually. Even Jesus had to go to a lonely place to pray after ministering to the crowds (see Luke 5:16). Yet many leaders will run on fumes for weeks without resting and recharging. If you work your fingers to the bone without taking care of your own spiritual life, your axe will get so dull that hours of work will become fruitless and exhausting. Pull away regularly to sharpen your blade.

7. Good pastors stay open to receiving personal ministry. One ministry school in the United States taught its students that leaders should never share their struggles with anyone—because people would gossip about them or stab them in the back. I feel sorry for any pastor or leader who doesn't have a network of mentors and friends with whom they can share their deepest struggles. Leaders are just as flawed as anyone else and they need to confess their sins, process their pain and receive healing prayer. Leaders who stay isolated will end up emotionally unhealthy, and they do not finish well.

8. Good pastors never lose their spiritual passion. King Saul is a sad example of a failed leader. He started well but ended miserably. May the Lord deliver us all from the spirit of Saul, who felt the call of God and experienced the oil of the Spirit's anointing in his youth but departed from God's ways in his later years.

We can't stay faithful to the Lord if His flame is not continually blazing in our hearts. Even when the apostle Paul was in prison, he wrote, "I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14). Paul continually stoked the fire of the Holy Spirit in his life because he had a secret life with God. He prayed continually, he soaked his mind in God's Word and he lived on

the altar of surrender every day.

No pastor is perfect, but I pray that your pastor is growing in all of these qualities. And please don't forget to show him or her your appreciation before this month is over.

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