

How to be a Blessing to Your Pastor

Eph 4:11-16 (NKJV) "And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, (12) for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, (13) till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

A Pastor is one of Christ's five office gifts to the Church. Yes, pastoring is a gift... and a pastor is a GIFT that God gives to a church. The term pastor comes from "shepherd," one who guides and cares for a flock.

Serving as a pastor is a remarkable and awesome blessing and privilege, but sometimes pastors are the loneliest people in the church. Often their hours are long, the pay minimal, the criticism considerable and constant. Despite the joys of serving God, feelings of disappointment, discouragement, and defeat can plague the best of them. Here are ways to receive his ministry and become a blessing to him.

1. Roll up your sleeves and become a part of the team - Be present faithfully at church and show that you're eager to follow his leadership. This will bless your life and be a tremendous encouragement to your pastor. Look for opportunities to use your gifts and talents for the work of Christ. And be a soul winner. People all around us are lost in sin, dying and going to hell. Do all in your power to win them to Jesus Christ. Tell them what Christ has done for you and what He can do for them."Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins." (James 5:19-20)

2. Be openly responsive - Nothing so animates and excites a spiritual leader as seeing people respond to the preaching and teaching. Show him that you're listening, and even say "Amen" once in a while. Not only will it make his day, but the service will probably be shorter... as it is a proven fact that preachers often unconsciously repeat themselves when they feel they're not connecting with their hearers.

3. Submit to the Leadership of Your Pastor - The Bible says "Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you." (Heb 13:17). We are also instructed to follow and imitate those spiritual leaders as they follow Christ. Follow the man of God who is following Jesus Christ as set forth in the Word of God. "Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct."(Heb 13:7)

4. Treat him with the proper respect - Treat him with as much or more respect that you would anyone else in authority. Sometimes folks can think of him as an employee, instead of a spiritual leader... but this is not the case. A pastor's is God's appointed man, to guide the soul of you and your family, and needs our love and respect. As an expression of your respect, address him as "pastor" rather than by his first name, especially while on the church premises. "And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, (13) and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake..." (1 Th 5:12-13)

5. Pray, Pray Pray for Your Pastor - You know how much opposition you receive from the world, the flesh, and the devil, but your pastor receives even more. Pray for him ev-

ery day, and ask God to shower your pastor with an abundance of love, hope, joy, faith, peace, power, wisdom, and courage. Pray for your spiritual leader's maturity and growth in the faith. As you pray keep in mind this wisdom from German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: "If you treat a person as he is, he will stay as he is; but if you treat him as if he were what he ought to be, he will become what he ought to be and could be." As Paul wrote, "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you, and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith." (2 Th 3:1-2)

6. Commit to stand with him through hard times - Don't be a fair-weather friend. A real friend is someone who stays with you in the bad weather of life, guards you when you are off your guard, restrains your impetuosity, delights in your wholeness, forgives your failures, does not forsake you when others let you down.

7. Throw away the measuring stick - Don't expect your pastor to do things the same way his predecessors did. Expect God to use your spiritual leader to bring about effective ministry in the present... and do not stereotype him with the mistakes of other spiritual leaders you've known. Let your pastor be himself. Be reminded that your pastor is a human being and will not be perfect... and also appreciate the fact that he is a unique person with his own distinct personality, gifts and talents. Not all pastors are the same, so don't put him in a box and expect him to be a duplicate of others you've known.

8. Be patient and understanding - with your pastor, his mate, and his children. Do not expect your pastor or his family to be perfect, they are human. A man of God has the same human tendencies that we all face. Let your pastor's spouse be themselves, and don't

place unspoken expectations on them to perform particular ministries or be like former pastor's spouses. Just love them in finding their place.

9. Support him financially - so he can keep his mind on the work of the ministry. If a man cannot properly care for his family, he will be distracted from the ministry. It costs your pastor just as much to live as it does you, and in some cases more because of the additional transportation and the way he is expected to dress. "Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer is worthy of his wages." (1 Tim 5:17-18)

10. Give Him the Benefit of the Doubt - Support your pastor even when he can't publicly explain why certain decisions or actions have been made. You need to bear in mind that pastors and leaders frequently cannot defend themselves publicly in order to protect the guilty. And professional ethics sometimes demands silence over issues that are very sensitive. If a tough decision takes place, support your pastor amid the criticism that always comes on the heels of tough decisions.

11. Knock off Behind His Back Criticism - Unlike most workers who are evaluated once or twice a year, clergy are often critiqued weekly after each worship service. It's not unusual to hear people say "the music was poor," "the hymn selection was awful," or "the sermon was boring." This excess criticism, especially when distributed about, can cause a lot of harm.

12. Squelch Gossip and Bad Mouthing - Do not speak against or listen to gossip or slander about your pastor. If you hear negative comments, respond with a positive one. If misinformation is being spread, correct it

with the accurate information. Or, if people are gossiping, just walk away. The Apostle Paul said, "Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses." (1 Tim 5:19)

13. Look for opportunities to encourage him - Tell him when he has helped you. Eph. 4:29 teaches us to say things that edify. You minister grace to your pastor when you tell him how he has helped you. He will be a more effective, dedicated servant of God if you give him some feedback on his ministry to you (see Prov. 3:27). It will also be very encouraging if you tell your Sunday School teacher, husband, or wife, and children how they have helped or been a blessing to you. Praise doesn't cost - it pays great dividends - in the home, in the church, in the school, and on the job. And be sure to recognize Him and His Wife on birthdays, anniversaries and Christmas. It is not always necessary to give gifts, but to be remembered on these special days is an expression of your love and encouragement.

14. Stay focused on the big picture - The big picture is JESUS... and to love, forgive and seek to bring souls into the Kingdom of God. Don't get weighed down by church politics, nonsense, offenses or whatever else, but keep your focus on Jesus and on what the church and the pastor are really all about.

Unless otherwise stated, all scripture references were taken from The New King James Bible, © Thomas Nelson Inc., 1982.

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