

HOW TO ENCOURAGE
Your Pastor

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An Encourage Ministry Resource
of the
Pensacola Bay Baptist Association

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Introduction | *Why Care*

Isn't the pastor supposed to be the one doing the caring? Why should those sitting in the pew spend effort caring about the one behind the pulpit? Such questions might be running through your mind when you picked up this booklet. Perhaps you haven't thought about your pastor being an actual person, another follower of Christ who is prone to need. But he is. He is open to life's struggles as much as anyone. Yet he has been called to extend influence and care over the church. Thus, when he is cared for well, he will be better positioned to fulfill that ministry calling. In the PBBA, we strongly believe that an encouraged pastor is a better pastor, and we pray this resource will help your church toward that end.

In this booklet you will discover ten areas where your church can care for your pastor. Additional resources and ideas have been added to each topic to assist you in your caring efforts. By no means is this an exhaustive list. This booklet could be helpful for your personnel team or deacon body to work through in order to shore up any area that might need some attention. A little effort can go a long way but doing nothing (forcing the pastor to fight for himself) can have damaging affects to the health of your church. After reading this booklet, consider meeting with your pastor to gain his feedback on how your church can love him even better. If a third party could aid in him giving honest feedback (e.g. Association), seek it out. I know you are glad your pastor fights for you; be sure you fight for him.

Chapter 1 | *Praying for Your Pastor*

“Thirty-seven requests. Good grief.” That was the response of Pastor Tim as he looked over the prayer requests that had been submitted in the past two weeks. Tim wanted to be diligent in addressing each one, whether it be a name given him in the hallway, a long description in prayer meeting or via a text. While praying on another’s behalf is a blessing, his strength seemed to drain away bit by bit as he reviewed each one. He loved his church. He loved caring for his flock and wouldn’t want to do anything else; but on this Monday afternoon he couldn’t help but wonder, “Am I on anybody’s list? Is anyone praying for me?” Sure, he had heard the remark, “praying for you pastor”, but was unsure if anyone was *actually* on bended knee before the Father on his behalf.

Prayer is to serve as a defining part of your church; a cornerstone that sustains and shapes every event and endeavor. Having prayer play such a role is more than being a *fan* of prayer; rather, a practitioner. Thus, churches who care practically for their pastor ensure statements such as “I’ll be praying for you” are not merely religious platitudes. The hand of God moves when God’s people pray, not just talk.

Perhaps the greatest expression of care one can display for their pastor is through intentional, focused prayer. Prayer moves hearts when there seems to be no other way. Prayer gives answers and wisdom to questions and uncertainty. Prayer strengthens the heart when the physical grip is gone. Your pastor has a biblical responsibility to give time to prayer and the Word of God (Acts 6). But that priority in his ministry description doesn’t mean that he is the only one who is to be doing the praying.

Your pastor has a spiritual target on his back. His decisions affect all those under his shepherding care, and Satan is especially seeking to steal, kill and destroy his efforts. To help lift your pastor in prayer, here are a few ways you can pray for your pastor.

1. **During His Time of Study** – Your pastor is tasked to serve the full nutritional menu of the biblical canon to those in the pew. His study time is essential. There’s no room for him to be wrong on the text. The stakes are too high. He must rightly know the meaning of the text and then develop, in partnership with the Holy Spirit, that unchangeable truth into a spiritual “dish” you can take into your life. To aid him as he goes into the spiritual battleground of his study, ask him what day(s) and when he carves out to study. Then, set a reminder for you to be praying for him during that time. Pray for him to have clarity on the text. Pray for distractions to be minimal so he can give himself fully to the task. Pray for him to have ordered thinking and filling of the Spirit so that he can develop the spiritual truths into a form the hearers can easily digest.
2. **Before and During His Preaching** – Heading into a worship service and then behind the pulpit can feel like heading into a war zone. The pressure goes far beyond any fear of public speaking, the spiritual battle is thick. To “arm” your pastor, ensure he is prayed over *before* each service. This might be a rotation of people (e.g. deacons) who meet in a given room to pray over him before he heads into the service, a team gathered in a side room during the message, or even a time during the service where he is prayed for in preparation for the sermon. And then continue that prayerful attitude *during* the sermon, for Him to crucify Himself with Christ and be filled with the Holy Spirit as He gives God’s people God’s word. (Yes, it is possible to listen and pray at the same time.)

3. **For His Family (wife, children, health)** – The pastor is more than a position holder, he is a person. And the blessings and struggles of life touch him just as much as any. Thus, praying for your pastor is not isolated to his tasks as a pastor, but to all of him. His wife and kids bear so much the public eye never sees (more on that in later chapters). But praying over each person in his family must not be overlooked. Asking your pastor how you can pray for his children or asking his wife how you can pray for her will be of great encouragement. Let them be as generic or specific as they desire (there is no reason for you to demand details). God knows the details, and He is the One who brings the answer. Beyond humbly *asking* how to pray, actually pray. Set aside time in your week (perhaps a certain day every week) to give unhurried time in prayer for your pastor and *each* person in their family. Lift them up individually. Additionally, it can be an extra blessing to drop them a note from time to time to let them know you have been lifting them up in prayer.

Chapter 2 | *Caring for the Pastor's Wife*

“I didn’t sign up for this”, JoAnn spoke through angered tears to her husband Jim. She and Jim had been married for fourteen years. When they got married, Jim worked in computers. But after a couple of years, Jim felt the call to pastor and JoAnn was open and eager to begin the new journey. Fast-forward to today and their church is struggling a bit. The church grew for the first few years, but the last couple had been difficult after Jim made some tough decisions to deal with known sinful behavior by some leaders in the church. Murmurings started, and little remarks began to be shared with JoAnn with the hope that she could be a tool to get to Jim. But when that didn’t work, the verbal abuse escalated and the anger growing within JoAnn was about to bust.

Perhaps the most difficult role in the church is that of the pastor’s wife. While the pastor is the one who has the more public role, it is the pastor’s wife who bears the private burden. As a type of pastor to pastors in my role with the PBBA, I have seen the heaviness of this burden repeated time and again.

I have been blessed to have a supportive and encouraging wife throughout my ministry. Candace and I have been married nearly twenty years and dated for several years before that. I remember when our paths were moving toward marriage and we had the conversation as to whether or not she wanted “in” on the call of ministry that was upon my life. I knew the burden that would come upon her and wanted to give her an “out.”

She hopped on board this ministry rollercoaster with me and has been my partner ever since. And we have been through a lot. I know I could not have made it through these years of ministry without her. She has been my sounding board, my confidant, my encourager and

more. When gaps opened up in the church I pastored, she readily stepped in to bear the burden because she didn't want me overloaded – even when it was in an area far outside of her comfort zone. Further, when difficult home-related issues arose suddenly on Sunday, she kept them from until Sunday afternoon or Monday so that I wouldn't be distracted heading into the pulpit.

In light of the familiar saying, “when the wife's happy, everybody's happy”, I want to give some ideas on how a church can care for the pastor's wife.

- 1. Let her be her** – God has gifted your pastor's wife in a unique way that is for the benefit of the church – just like he did everyone else in the church for the common good (1 Cor. 12:7). As such, it is healthy to encourage your pastor's wife to press into *her* giftedness. It is not fair to expect her to pick up the pieces of what others are unwilling to or neglect to do. Don't expect her to be the default “utility player” for every ministry in the church (even if the last pastor's wife did). Thus, expressing her giftedness might be more behind the scenes or it might be more public. She might be an introvert or an extrovert. Either way, don't demand that she be a leader, coordinator or teacher. Let her be her. Trust me, your church will be better for it in the long run...and so will she.
- 2. Show appreciation to her** – Pastor Appreciation month is often emphasized in October. During your time of Pastor/Staff Appreciation, don't forget to extend appreciation to your pastor's wife (and staff spouses). Find out what she likes and include gift cards and other items in line with her personality and tastes. Spread this out among the ladies of the church and have each one “adopt a day” to show some form of appreciation. As you see her in the hallways of your church, express your appreciation to her personally and let her know what a blessing she is to you and the church.

3. **Pray for and with her** – Your pastor’s wife holds heavy burdens, a load you cannot possibly imagine unless you have walked in her shoes. Remember, as your pastor carries much of your burdens, she carries his burdens as well. As such, take time to pray for and with her. Send her a text, email or message asking if there is any way that you can be in prayer for her. Then, actually pray for her. Even better, pray WITH her. Finally, if you *have* spent some time in prayer for her, drop her a note or message letting her know.
4. **Step Up** – Your pastor’s wife does exponentially more than anyone in the church realizes. And she still is a full-time mom, perhaps has a full-time job and also must be wife to her often-difficult husband (yes, I do mean your pastor). As such, ask her if there is anything you can do to serve her – either at home or in her other responsibilities. Further, let her know that you know she needs to step away from time to time for a mental, emotional and physical rest – both for solitude and to spend time ensuring her marriage is as strong as possible. Therefore, let her know that you are willing to fill any gaps that might arise whenever she feels she needs to get away. Let her know that you’ve “got her back” and are willing to step up so that she can get away. All too often, pastors and their wives don’t know of anyone willing to fill in for crucial responsibilities and thus, end up neglecting self-care. This neglect can lead to burn-out. But without stating the obvious, be militantly faithful in fulfilling your responsibilities and she won’t feel more burden of yet another need.

These are but four simple yet powerful ways you can encourage your pastor’s wife which will make a deep impact on your church. But don’t think that these are the only four. Your pastor’s wife is unique. Ask *her* how you can be of encouragement to her. If needed, have a couple of ladies in the church, perhaps the deacons’ wives or someone else she connects closely with, take on this personal ministry of

encouraging your pastor's wife. But don't force the encouragement. And don't come with superficial or ulterior motives. Be genuine. Be humble. Be there. Be praying. Be encouraging. Be mindful. Be loving. Be faithful. Be the church.

Chapter 3 | *Caring for Your Pastor's Children*

Maddie and Trent were two well-rounded teenagers. Children of Pastor Rob, Maddie and Trent had long learned they could not go unnoticed when on the church campus. People who they didn't know, knew them...well. Their hobbies, grades, and life experiences seemed to be public knowledge. Not having the out-going personality of their father, Maddie and Trent politely answered everyone's questions and knew the spotlight came with the ministry territory. But their territory was different - Maddie was in the band and Trent played baseball. While their dad always adjusted his schedule to be supportive, they felt they were always in competition with the church. While he was *everyone's* pastor, he was *their* dad.

One of my favorite Pixar movies is *Finding Nemo*, the rescue of a clownfish, Nemo, by his nervously courageous father, Marlin. In one of the scenes, Nemo finds himself in a fish tank existing under the nervous gaze of Darla. Darla is known for not taking care of the fish her uncle gives her. (Poor Mr. Chuckles). Upon running up to the tank, Darla bangs on the tank to see her "fishy." Needless to say, Nemo and his friends run and hide.

Though humorous, this scene is an illustration of what life can be like for the children of pastors. The ministry is often equated to that of a fishbowl – everyone is inspecting the pastor's every move to both see an example who they can emulate as well as identify a chink that they can expose.

For better or worse, this expectation comes with the territory of the pastorate. When I felt the call to ministry, I was counseled on how to navigate these fishbowl waters. And since I was serving in a ministry

position before I was married, I could warn Candace so she would know what she was getting into (so she didn't run).

But my kids didn't get that choice. They didn't get a vote as to living in the ministry fishbowl. And while I personally train, equip and encourage them to only be mindful about the expectations of mom and dad (which is really all they need to worry about), there is a way the church can assist to help them reduce this fishbowl feel and help them flourish as pastor's kids (PK's). Below are a few ways the church can care for their pastor's kids and in so doing care for their pastor.

1. **Let them be a kid and let your pastor support them** – Pastor's children can feel a burden that they need to be perfect. They know many eyes are looking their way. But they are not perfect (and neither are your kids). They need to feel the joy of being a kid. Kid life is filled with exploration, sports, recitals, birthday parties, and so much more. Opportunities for children seem to be evermore expanding, and kids want to participate and explore. This means your pastor's children will not be attending *every* event the church has. Conflicts with the church calendar will occur. While there are biblical priorities that your pastor will instill in his children, the events at the church are not to always have priority. (A late planned committee meeting should not have priority of a long-planned recital). Will there be exceptions? Sure. But exceptions should not become the rule. Let your pastor's kids enjoy being a kid; and, further, let them see their dad supporting them. Remember, your pastor's children only have one dad. By doing this, your church will have a living sermon of how to be a father as they get to see him guide and love his children. The institution of the family was formed before the church. Further, if your pastor can't take care of his family, he is not qualified to care for the church (1 Tim 3). So, take a breath and let his kids be kids.

2. **Don't use them to get to dad** – The children of your pastor are not messengers for you to pass info, either good or bad, on to your pastor. If you need to get a message to your pastor, tell it to HIM or his assistant. There is NO circumstance where it is okay for you to express your grievances by telling them to his kids. It is the small and cowardly person who uses the pastor's kids for their own purposes. Jesus had a reputation for having his anger level kick up when children were not dealt with properly and God's house was not used properly. Thus, be warned, should you use your pastor's kids to express your frustrations about your pastor, expect to receive the anger of dad-pastor. Just don't do this.
3. **Encourage them to reach THEIR potential** – Church folks can have in their mind what they think the pastor's kids should do within the church – play an instrument, sing a solo or some other perceived expectation. But God has wired children uniquely. And they can still be growing in a relationship with God fulfilling their created purpose inside and outside the church by doing unconventional activity. Their bent might be in sports or technology or simply writing words of inspiration. Do you know the likes and dislikes of your pastor's children? Remember, God is the One who has given them gifts for the common good of the church (1 Cor. 12:7); thus, encourage them to press into whatever is that giftedness. If you find a training or video that is in line with what you hear they love, share it with them. Help them reach their potential, encourage them in their walk with God; don't pressure them to fit into your expectations and preferences.
4. **Pray for them** – There is a spiritual war that is raging at all times. Scripture teaches that Satan is like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. And his evil manipulative self can seek to go through the pastor's kids in order to affect the pastor, and thus weaken the church. Make it a regular practice to pray for the children of those

whose dad is the pastor or whose parents are on staff. Write a note and place it on your pastor's desk for him to hand to his kids letting them know you are praying for them.

- 5. Remember their birthday and/or special accomplishment** – The life of a pastor is quite public. He is the one out front with the majority of attention on him (he preaches IN FRONT of people); as such, kids can often feel left in the shadows. Small gestures go a long way to handle this reality. Know the birthdays of your pastor's kids. Send/give them a gift or a card (a gift card might be the best). Further, if you see on social media that they made some accomplishment, be sure to tell them how proud you are the next time you see them. Finally, when Pastor/Staff Appreciation emphasis comes around, don't forget the kids.

By no means is this list exhaustive¹. Kids are unique. Circumstances are unique. Let me encourage you to chat with your pastor and/or your pastor's wife and ask them for ideas about how you and your church can better care for their children.

¹ *The Pastor's Kid* by Barnabas Piper is a great book that could guide you to expand ministry to your pastor's family.

Chapter 4 | *Communication to Your Pastor*

Most Thursday mornings Pastor Adam spent time finalizing the worship guide – details, edits, space for sermon notes. But on Sunday afternoons he usually found two or three sections of the guide stuffed under his office door containing notes written from people in the congregation. Complaints and critiques, but seldom the compliment. He was glad it wasn't a text on his walk up to the pulpit (he's had that one too); but he couldn't help but wonder, "is this really how an adult is supposed to express themselves?"

Much of a pastor's responsibility is to speak to his congregation. This might be in the corporate setting such as a worship service or classroom. But his speaking can also come in the private settings of a counseling session or personal visit. Through his speaking, he fulfills his Ephesians 4:12 calling to "equip the saints to serve." But there are also times when it is the people within the church who need to be the speakers, and the pastor is the listener. Most times these are pleasant conversations but other times they need to be more painful in nature. Consider these three best practices for communicating to your pastor.

- 1. CHECK YOURSELF** – Because we are all human, we are all flawed; thus, when interaction occurs between two flawed individuals, there is the potential for frustration, even anger. If you find yourself wanting to share a concern (a.k.a. give a piece of your mind), take a moment to check yourself. Breathe, count to ten. Be sure that you are not coming from a self-centered position. Bounce your concern off a neutral person (not someone who will just back you up). While anger is part of the spectrum of human emotions, (Jesus even demonstrated that), be sure you are angered over holy things and not self-driven preferences. Ultimately realize

that *how* you say something is a huge determining factor as to whether he will accurately hear your concern.

2. CHECK YOUR METHOD – We live in a digital age where connectivity is high – text, social media, etc. Sadly, the quality of communication has diminished. Though emojis are often found in our communication, they are no replacement for inflection and volume found in face to face conversation. Conversely, the tone of a conversation can be misread when solely relying on CAPITAL LETTERS for volume or emojis to express emotion. If you really want to be heard and your words received, speak them rather than any other form. If the matter is simple where digital means can suffice, read and re-read before pushing send. Even take some time to let it sit in your outbox to review later before pushing send. Finally, there is no point in sending an unsigned letter to your pastor. This is cowardly on the sender's part, and nine out of ten times is never read (the majority of pastors have a rule of thumb that they don't read unsigned letters.)

3. CHECK YOUR TIMING – What you have to say can be of value, choosing the right method to communicate adds great value, but knowing *when* to communicate adds tremendous value. Here's a few suggestions.

- Don't send your pastor a text at 2am just to ask if the church breakfast is still happening next week. Only text at 2am if someone's life is in jeopardy or the church is on fire.
- Don't call your pastor on Saturday morning requesting an urgent counseling meeting to discuss a subject you have been wrestling with for weeks or longer. (You've waited that long, don't take him away from his family on his day off.)
- Don't take a complaint to him before 12:30pm on Sunday (or perhaps even at all on the Lord's Day). He needs to be

focused on teaching with an unhindered focus. He will not give your topic full attention, and then he will be distracted when teaching. Respect God's Word, him and the entire church enough to wait until after the service.

- Don't drop verbal "bombs" as you leave the service (example: "Maybe one day we can find a real pastor"). You want him to hear clearly what you believe is the benefit of the common good of the church; thus, set up an appointment or ask when you can speak with him. To only drop verbal "bombs" as you leave might make you feel better, but it will change little of the situation.

If you and your church will put these principles into practice, your pastor will more readily receive what you have to say.

Chapter 5 | *How to Pay Your Pastor*

John looked at the budget proposal for the upcoming year that the church's finance team had just sent to him. He had pastored the church for eight years, but no change in compensation since year two, despite the fact that giving had increased more than 50% since he arrived. With the cost of health care on the rise and kids getting older, he sighed at the thought of telling his wife. Is it possible to squeeze their family budget belts even tighter? He didn't see how. Everything in the economy had changed but theirs. The church told him they cared for him, but it didn't seem to show up in his paycheck.

The topic of money is often a point of great debate, even contention, in all too many churches. Even though the topic of money is mentioned in the Bible more than heaven or hell (a statistic that reaffirms the battle for our heart), broaching the subject can be quite uncomfortable. And when it comes to the *salary* of the pastor, that too can be quite touchy as people bring their personal opinions to that decision, which may or may not be accurate. Further, deciding how to pay someone who both serves and leads you can be a little odd and awkward. Let me give you some guidance so you can better minister to your minister.

1. Poverty is Not the Goal: You've probably heard the old adage for how churches pray for their pastor, "Lord, You keep him humble and we'll keep him poor." Next time that is jokingly stated, take a good look. You will notice that neither the pastor nor his wife finds it humorous. The beatitude is "poor in spirit" not "poor in pocket." Now, some churches have extremely low budgets. (If that is the case, you should still have a written budget regardless of how small). Smaller churches will have smaller budgets, fewer people giving, fewer staff, and can only afford small salaries. But whatever your

overall budget is, evaluate it. If you spend more money per year on flowers in the sanctuary than you do on your pastor, you are out of balance. If you spend more money on SS literature than on your pastor, get with another church to use their material so that you will have more funds to fairly pay your pastor.

- 2. Don't Penalize the Present Because of the Past:** Some churches refuse to pay their pastor fairly because of abuses of a past leader (or even someone they saw on the news). For example, some pastor from ten years ago embezzled church funds (which is clearly wrong) so the church seeks to prevent that from happening again by giving as little money as possible to the current pastor. Let me make this request: don't let the abuse of a previous pastor, or any other pastor for that matter, be a reason to treat your present pastor unbiblically and unfairly. Put wise safeguards in place and pay him fairly.
- 3. Choose your decision makers wisely:** Be extremely wise in how your church develops the pay of your pastor. The process needs to be done by a group of trusted and wise people, spiritually mature, who are able to do the hard work to make this right decision. I have always been cautious of someone who "campaigns" for such a position. Beware! But it is unfair to your pastor to open this process up to the whole church at a meeting for them to discuss. Not everyone who has an opinion is good with money and/or is spiritually mature (often, those who try to control others aren't very good at controlling themselves). I have often found that those who are most unfair when it comes to compensating their pastor are those who've been unfairly compensated themselves. Also, be sure those who are in the development of the pastor's salary are tithers. It doesn't make sense for someone to force their scrooge-like opinion on the church while they are not doing what they are supposed to do.

4. Use the Available Resources: When addressing this topic, I am thankful that there are already several reliable resources churches can use. Here are a couple:

- a. The LifeWay Compensation Study – Each year LifeWay Christian resources surveys ministers across the United States to gather compensation details. Then, when churches are looking for what is fair pay, teams/committees can conduct a search according to their state, church attendance, church budget, experience of the pastor/minister, education, bi-vo/full-time, etc.
- b. GuideStone Compensation Planning Guide – GuideStone Financial Services provides an extensive database of resources for churches and their stewardship or personnel teams to use that will guide them in how to pay for their pastor and care for his overall financial well-being. Using their resources, churches can ensure they are following all the legal requirements when it comes to compensation and ensure they are not putting undue burden on their pastor when it comes to taxes.
- c. Leadership Network Salary Guide – Leadership Network provides compensations tables for thirty roles in the church. Using their analysis guide can help you determine if you are paying too little, too much, or just right.

Look, no two churches are completely alike; thus, you can't just copy what another church is doing and call it "good." Hard work is needed. Further, wouldn't you want someone to crunch the numbers and give it some thought if it was about you? Biblically, your pastor is worth double honor (1 Tim 5:17). Now, I'm not suggesting to any church that they purchase their pastor a golden pulpit to preach behind or a personal jet to do visits. Rather, just be fair and think it through.

Apply generosity to the one who leads, teaches and serves you so that he can more easily fulfill his calling.

Chapter 6 | *Pastoring YOU*

Marge is a member of the church for more than thirty years. Because of her “expertise” in the life of the church, she embraces the self-imposed ministry to share her opinion with Pastor Steve. “He knows I mean well,” she reminds herself. Marge doesn’t seem to notice that Pastor Steve has a growing temptation to find a different route to the worship center because he and Marge’s path usually cross, and she always has a few “suggestions.” Internally, he thinks of her as a type of garbage truck, always welcoming the junk of everyone in the church and transporting it to him to be unloaded. He loves her, serves her, disciples her and leads her with a humble heart. But the stress of pastoring Marge is always ticking upwards.

Have you ever thought about what it is like to pastor YOU? Of all the people in the world...YOU. With all your pleasantries and baggage. With your abundance of joy and sarcastic comments. With your spiritual gifts of service and what you believe is the spiritual gift of criticism. As much as you think the pastoral task of being on the other side of you is simple, it’s not (or at least not always). Here are five tips for you to use toward your pastor in his pursuit to pastor you.

- 1. Be Gracious** – Grace: getting and giving what is not deserved. Your pastor is not perfect. Like all of us, he has flaws and struggles. Despite his great attempts and his above reproach, 1 Timothy 3 endeavors, there will be times when he has bad days, judgment lapses, weary eyes, worn nerves and much more. When these days come, and they will come, be gracious. Give him love when he might come across unlovable. Give him forgiveness when his words might have felt extra sharp. Give him a hand when circumstances might appear crushing. Smile. Give the benefit of the doubt. Give...and it shall be given unto you. Be gracious.

2. **Be Flexible** – There are many people in your church and there is only one who is your pastor. That means your pastor cannot be everywhere you think he should be. Schedules will conflict. Calendars will overlap. Emergencies will arise. Other obligations will arise. Therefore, be flexible in that your pastor might not be able to attend your small group (Sunday School) social gathering. His children might have an event scheduled at the same time as your monumental birthday party. He might be running late to an appointment with you because he has been up all night at the hospital with another family. You will be fine. Take a breath. He still loves you. Be flexible.
3. **Be Informative** – In twenty-five years of ministry I have been “in the hot seat” for items I never knew about. A surgery that occurred. An event that came and went. A meeting I was to attend. But no one told me. It wasn’t that I forgot or wrote down the details wrong. It was that I was NEVER told. It had been assumed that I had known, that someone else had called/emailed/texted/taken care of informing the pastor. Or, it was thought that I had been trolling social media sites all day for details of everyone in the church. Nope. May I say, if the matter is something that your pastor is to know/do/consider, ensure you have let him know and don’t assume someone else is handling it.
4. **Be Aware** – While you are important, life happens outside of you. There is a high chance your pastor is not sitting around only concerned about what is happening in *your* life. Thus, when you see your pastor in the church hallway (or out and about) realize that he might have just gotten off a painful conversation with an individual or just completed a hard meeting with a struggling family. Thus, he can be worn and a bit weary in your conversation or greeting. Don’t take this personally. While he will attempt to compartmentalize in order to focus on you, he is not always successful. I’m not seeking

to justify him being rude, but only to help you understand where he might be coming from. Just be aware. If in doubt, see number one.

- 5. Be Humble** – Consider your pastor’s biblical task- “To equip the saints to serve “(Ephesians 4:12). How? Using the Bible for “teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16). Thus, as he leads you to a higher level of holiness he is tasked to step on your toes and cause you to be uncomfortable at times. Think about it – taking the sword of the Bible to chip away everything in your life that doesn’t look like Jesus can be a painful process. And it can be tempting to “shoot the messenger” instead of heed the message. As such, when your pastor holds up the mirror of the Bible for you to look into (faithfully and properly), humbly receive it and don’t think that he is just out to get you. Be humble.

These are just five tips/principles for you to keep in mind. Perhaps they hit you, perhaps not. Regardless, I ask that you consider what it must be like for your pastor to pastor you. And then send him a thank you note for all the hugs, smiles, encouragement, listening sessions, wisdom, discipleship and time that he has invested in you. If in doubt, see #1.

Chapter 7 | *Rest for your Pastor*

“You look tired.” Those were the “encouraging” words Pastor Gary heard as he passed one of his members in the hallway. His quick reply, “it’s been a busy season.” But he knew the season seemed to be infinite. One project bled into a planned event that merged with a crisis. He promised himself and his family that he would soon lighten up, but that promise remained unfulfilled week after week. He often thought, “the needs are too big.” But then his chest began to get tight.

The nearest star is estimated to be 4.37 light years away. For some pastors, rest seems to be even further away.

- The quality sermon must be ready to go *every* Sunday.
- The ministries need to move forward.
- The needs of the congregation must be addressed.
- The community must be engaged, people disciplined, leaders developed.

The list can be wearisome. And this list doesn’t even mention the higher priorities of personal spiritual growth plus quantity and quality time with family.

There are some days when the thought of taking a break can usher in a wave of guilt upon your pastor. The matters he deals with have eternal implications and any moment that is not spent working diligently in his ministry calling can feel inexcusable.

I have repeatedly felt such waves of guilt and pressure in my years of ministry. 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days year. Always on call, even while on “vacation.” And with no endless supply of energy given out at seminary graduation, weariness creeps in.

Consequently, I have brushed up against burnout on numerous occasions. And for this I have no one to blame but myself. God has given clear guidance that rest is to be part of the stewardship of our life and ministry. He factored it into the creation order, Day 7 of the Sabbath, and Jesus demonstrated getting away from the demands of the day to, if you will, “unstring the bow” (Mark 6).

If the pastor neglects rest, his emotions become wrecked, his mind gets cloudy, and his body begins to break down. He becomes little good to anyone, and the ministry he dearly loves is left to fend for itself because he is burnt out.

But people in the pew can assist their pastor with his rest. Structure can be established that builds in regular getaways, budgets can be planned that bring in guest preachers in his absence, people can be appointed to temporarily carry out certain duties. Such effort and thoughtfulness will help a church ensure they have a pastor that remains refreshed and ready to deliver Spirit-led sermons, biblical counsel, and wise leadership.

Below is an excerpt from a book I highly recommend that any church can use to develop a plan to care for their pastor. the book is “Lift Your Pastor” by Michael Lewis and Andy Spencer.²

Lewis and Spencer outline 5 practices every pastor should embrace to remain refreshed and ready to pastor and serve.

1. Rest one hour every day (Think, having a quiet time or prayer time.)
2. Rest for one day every week. (A sabbath, a 24-hour period when no calls have to be returned, emails or texts responded to.)

² You can find more about their ministry at liftyourpastor.com or thepastorsadvocate.com.

3. Take a rest one weekend every quarter of the year (A family get away. The Christian Hospitality Network has a database the offers discounts to pastors.)
4. Have one-week rest every year (time set aside to focus on your relationship God, your spouse and children. Most pastors don't use the time allotted to them by their church).
5. Take a one-month rest every five years. (A sabbatical, an extended rest for the pastor's spiritual refreshment and renewal – at least one month but no longer than three. And yes, this is paid time.)

Now, will the hour, the day, the weekend, the week, the month create “gaps” in ministry where your pastor is resting and not working? Absolutely. Therefore, your church should work with him to develop a plan so that those gaps are filled. For example, who will cover various needs during his day off or when he is out of town. Further, friendly faces need to routinely encourage your pastor to take those times of rest. Remember, when your pastor is cared for, he is better positioned to care for the congregation and fulfill his ministry calling.

Trust me when I write this: giving your pastor these times of refreshing will ensure he is able to give 100% to your church and not much less because he is struggling.

Chapter 8 | *Burnout Prevention*

Pastor Andrew had given it all he had. Seeking to revitalize the struggling church he had pastored for the last two years; he had poured himself dry. Jam-packed days, meeting filled evenings, event-laced weekends filled his calendar. But no vacation was to be found. No margin. No moment to breathe or recoup – mentally, emotionally or physically. And the unrelenting pressure to “fix” and/or “grow” everything drove him to the brink of a crash. On the outside he looked “on fire” for Jesus. After all, “busyness is next to godliness” had been how he was raised. But on the inside, burnout was fast approaching. His health was struggling. His marriage was strained, and the thought of the upcoming sermon series felt overwhelming. Every day seemed to begin with the same question, “How much longer can I keep doing this?”

Too many pastors push themselves to the very edge. Whether for their belief that the ministry stakes are too high or for their own ego, they never let off the gas. Consequently, they burnout. They become sidelined and take an early exit from ministry.

While your pastor is responsible for managing himself and making wise decisions regarding his health and schedule, he is also part of the broader community of the church where we are to spur one another on and bear one another’s burdens. Below are a several ways you can extinguish the emotional embers within him that could be leading toward a burnout.

1. Bless Your Pastor

Random gift cards – There is an unspoken assumption that the church will do something for Pastor Appreciation Month (and you should); however, showing appreciation at unexpected times feels more

genuine and sincere. When more energy flows from the pastor than into him, it won't take long for him to run dry. But random gift cards give unexpected energy and make him think, "wow, someone's actually thinking about me." Discover his favorite restaurant or store and get him a gift card (and the amount isn't what is important, it's the thought).

Projects around house – Your pastor may be quite the handyman, or you might wonder if he actually knows which end of a hammer to hold. Regardless, projects around the house can easily pile up because much of his energy can be spent recruiting people for ministry on the church campus. Inquire of him (or his wife) if there are any projects around the house that you could assist him on or do for him.

2. Encourage Him to Take Breaks

Vacations – Vacation days are built into pastor's job descriptions, but some pastors can be hesitant to take them. Encourage him take them, to turn off his phone and enjoy a time of refreshing – the church and the Kingdom of God will go on without him, and you will personally assist however you can.

Sabbatical – Every few years (often seven), your pastor should have an extended time for him to get away from his responsibilities (1-3 months), both to have fun and to learn. This extended time recharges the batteries and helps him reset for another season. There are numerous guides available to help your pastor and leadership develop a sabbatical plan.

Conferences – Good leaders are life-long learners. They are intentional on being poured into so that they can invest in others. Your pastor is not exempt and sending your pastor (and wife) to a ministry conference of their choosing can help them gain and sharpen ministry tools that will have long-term benefit to your church.

3. Do Your Part

Fulfill your responsibility – Chances are, you have agreed to serve in some part of the life of your church. But when someone does *not* do their part, everyone suffers. To prevent suffering, many pastors take on the responsibility themselves and do whatever is necessary – even to their own detriment. Thus, if you have agreed to serve in some area, do your job. If an emergency comes up, work to find a proper replacement and then give him heads up. Don't just dump it on your pastor. A church filled with volunteers who faithfully do what they have signed up to do, is a tremendous joy to a pastor.

Serve/visit/pray – All who are in the church are part of the body. Thus, there are some parts everyone can participate in. If you hear of someone in the hospital, go visit and pray with them in addition to letting your pastor know. If you hear of a ministry need, see if you can meet it instead of only passing the buck.

4. Relating without Requesting

Conversations without “what about...” – Your pastor is a real person. (I'm serious.). He is more than what he does in his pastoral duties. Thus, having conversations beyond ministry or the happenings within the church can relieve a bit of pressure. Have conversations without ever bringing up some event or burden or issue in your life or the church. A simple principle to remember: ask, “how's life?” before, “how's ministry?”

5. Pray for your pastor

Prayer moves mountains and there are days when the pastor feels he is stuck underneath a mountain. While he may be hesitant to share details for how you can pray for him, ask him. Even if you don't know details, God does, and you can still lift him up. Carve out a time of day or day per week to focus on praying for him (see Chapter 1). Even

better, ensure there are people who weekly pray with him and over him before each service. There is a spiritual target on his back and fighting life's battles are best done on bent knees and uplifted hands.

Chapter 9 | *Pastor Appreciation Month Prep*

October is often set aside as Pastor Appreciation Month. This can be a great time for you to intentionally bless and encourage the individual who has blessed and encouraged you throughout the year. So, the month doesn't sneak up on you and you miss the opportunity (like, "oops honey I forgot our anniversary"), let me give you some suggestions on making this a great Pastor Appreciation Month.

1. Recruit two to three people who can coordinate the efforts of your church. Ensure a cross-reference of people are on your team (older/younger, men/women).
2. Determine the scope of your appreciation; meaning, will this time of appreciation be toward your entire staff (which I recommend) or only to the senior pastor.
3. Determine if your appreciation will be confined to one day (ex. 3rd Sunday of October) or something that is spread through the month (ex. meals taken to family; cards sent every day).
4. Determine if your appreciation will be where the entire church contributes to a unified gift (or gifts) or where everyone is encouraged to give an individual gift. (Resources from Lifeway resources, Christian Book Distributors, Amazon, etc.).
5. Inquire from your pastor (staff) what is their favorite food, restaurants or places to shop. This information can help you customize your appreciation at a reception, or through gift cards.
6. If giving your pastor some type of vacation or get-a-way, look through the resources available throughout the country that cater to pastors and ministers (e.g. Christian Hospitality Network).
7. Determine how you will show appreciation to the pastor's family (remember to be specific to their personality).

8. Consider having a time of testimony (either during a service or putting a video together) where people share what the pastor means to them or what they have learned or how they have been blessed through his ministry.
9. Consider how your church could show appreciation through small gestures of service (ex. mowing the grass, gas card, babysitting if they have small kids).
10. Pray. Set aside time in a service for your church to surround your pastor (and staff) and pray over them.

Chapter 10 | *Pressing into Your Pastor's Personality*

Cookies-and-Crème, Fudge Tracks, Neapolitan. (Got your attention?) The various flavors of ice-cream goodness satisfy the craving and fill the tummy. But while many of their components are similar, they are unique, even different. The same is true with people – they come in all flavors and personalities. And the same is true with pastors. They are uniquely crafted, gifted and called. Pastor Anthony wished his church felt that he wanted those in his church to see *him*. For two years he felt the pressure to embody the personality (flavor) of the previous pastor – the former out-going, charismatic, much-loved pastor of fourteen years. He was not that guy. He was different. God wired him differently. But how could he and the church get on the same page?

Personalities run the gamut. One person has a majority of one personality style and another person has another, and yet another has a strong mix. Such differences in personality are common in public spaces, but they are also common in pastor circles. One pastor is fueled by being around people yet is uncomfortable in the details, while another pastor is drained by social interaction yet is emotionally fueled when strategizing and administrating. Neither style is wrong, they are just different.

While it is true that all pastors are to have the commonality of biblical standards in their conduct and character (ex. 1 Timothy 3), God has also wired each pastor in a unique fashion that is fitting for the call He has placed on their life (Psalm 139). As such, it is unwise and unfair for a church to expect all pastors to fit a particular and preferential mold, both relationally and in their personality (though they must fit the Biblical mold). Further, while it is natural for people in the pew to compare one pastor's personality against another yet demand your pastor change to fit your preference found in another,

such an expectation is not fair. Such demands often create unnecessary barriers between the pastor and his people, and it ignores the sovereignty of God, who has created the pastor and brought the pastor and church together for such a time as this.

It is wise for the church seeking to care for *their* pastor - and to maximize the ministry of the church - to press into the personality of their pastor. For the record but pressing into his personality does not exempt a pastor from working hard to improve.

Let me give you three suggestions:

- 1. Fill in his weak spots.** Some pastors are good with administration, some are not; some pastors are tech savvy, others still hold tightly to their flip phones. No pastor is best in *every* area. Therefore, lovingly work with your pastor to identify those ministry areas that are not his sweet spot. Next, surround him with people who are strong where he is weak. If he is not fond of administration, have a dedicated volunteer or staff person work closely with him to address admin issues that are on his plate. If tech is not his strong suite, have a highly-trusted person skilled in tech (e.g. social media) become his “voice” – posting under his profile as he shares information with them privately. Such partnership is part of the body of Christ functioning as a body instead demanding one part, the pastor, doing it all as you prefer (1 Cor. 12).
- 2. Consider *his* personality when thinking on *your* problem.** By nature, most pastors try, often to their fault, at being “superman” to their people. To jump over steeples in a single bound. But most end up running into the stained-glass window in the process. Thus, when you have a problem and want the counsel of your pastor, as you should, consider his personality when approaching him. If he is known to be a bit scattered on Sundays rushing to and fro’, wait until a low-key moment when he is able to focus (of course unless

the matter is truly an emergency, a life and death circumstance). If you know the problem you are facing could be received by him as negative, and if he has a personality that is quick to react, be extra careful on your word choice and tone and the setting in which you share. (Ignoring this can turn a small stream of a problem into a waterfall.) Additionally, your pastor might be one who likes to think a problem over while another pastor likes to talk through a problem out loud. Knowing his personality style will help tremendously. If he is a thinker, then expect it and don't get upset when he responds, "thanks for sharing this with me. Let me think it over, and I will get back to you tomorrow." While another pastor might remark, "let's schedule a time to discuss this through together this afternoon at 3pm."

- 3. Know when NOT to ask.** As mentioned above, many pastors will try to fulfill every request their people present them (remember the Superman and the steeple example). Well, there will be times when the pastor does *not* need to make the attempt at fulfilling your request. For example, you know that your pastor is a do-er. By that, I mean he seems to move heaven and earth, adjust his schedule, change his plans, and more, to serve and shepherd his flock. Well, there are times when his servant-heart can get in the way of right priorities. Consequently, his family takes a back seat and his opportunities to rest fly out the window. If you observe that your pastor is in the middle of a season where he is really on the move, much ministry is occurring, and an abundance of events are routine, don't request that he say the blessing at your child's birthday party or swing by your home to see the new paint on your walls. You know he would do these items if you asked (he loves you), but don't. Let him rest. Let him spend time with his family. Now, I agree that the pastor needs to set his own boundaries and stick to them. He's a big boy and needs to man up and own his schedule, but you can help him by NOT asking.

These three suggestions are really just a few of what could be a long list, of what could be a customized list for *your* pastor. Talk to your pastor or his wife, observe, listen, write down some observations. Be thankful that God is sovereign and is able to use the unique personalities of everyone for His glory.

Conclusion

Caring for your pastor can serve as fuel for your church. Any church that takes seriously a ministry of practically caring for their pastor will see a rapid transformation in his ministry and within all of your church. The principles and suggestions outlined in this booklet are simple, yet they are powerful, especially when done well, shared by many, and continued consistently. I challenge you to gather a few people who could take on this intentional ministry of caring for your pastor as a matter close to their heart.

Remember, an encouraged pastor is a better pastor.

