

# The Church's Responsibility to Its Pastor

by Dr. Gary Linton | Updated June 10th, 2017 It's not just pastors and church leaders who have a responsibility to their church, the church also has a responsibility to their pastor and leaders. 1 Thessalonians 5:12 says, "Appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction." Many churches lose dedicated pastors and ministers because they feel neglected and unappreciated. Below are a few important things pastors need from their church and its people.

## Cooperation and Support

Hebrews 13:17 says, "Obey them that have rule over you, and submit yourselves unto them for they watch over your souls, as they that must give an account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief, for that is unprofitable for you." You can make your pastor's job a joy or full of grief. One will be profitable to you and the other will not. That said, you should not submit to anyone in blind obedience. 1 Peter 5:3 says, "Neither as being lords over God's heritage but examples to the flock."

Follow your pastor's direction as long as their leadership is consistent with scripture. If you don't agree, pray for them instead of criticizing and talking negatively. Let God deal with it. The Holy Spirit can do a much better job than we can.

Your pastor is accountable to God. God works through headship and not the other way around. God's government is more like the military. There are different levels of headship over various areas which are all subject to the commander and chief. Your pastor is in a headship position over the church, under Jesus, the chief shepherd (Ephesians 4:11-16). A pastor is like the central nervous system. He receives messages from the head (Jesus) and directs them to members of the body to be carried out. When this is reversed, problems arise.

## Prayer and Spiritual Battles

The spiritual battles pastors and church leaders face are very difficult. That's why in 1 Timothy 2:1-2 Paul urges believers to pray for people in positions of authority. 1 Samuel 12:23 says, "Moreover, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you." This applies to leaders praying for their people and also people praying for their leaders. We have no reason to complain or criticize when we see our pastor go through difficulties if we haven't been praying for them.

Can you imagine the feeling of support, encouragement and strength that's infused into a leader when he knows his people are praying for him? In Acts 4:24, the religious leaders had threatened Peter and his company "lifted up their voices to God in one accord." Imagine feeling the pressure of the threat just issued and all your people begin to cry out to God in a thunderous fashion. In Acts 12:5, Peter is arrested and thrown in prison, "But prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God." In Acts 12:12, he was miraculously released by an angel and goes to Mary's home and sees "many gathered together praying."

Let your pastor know you are praying for him. In the churches I've pastored we had a prayer meeting before each church service. When I heard people lifting their voices to God, praying fervently for the service, it supercharged me. It gave me courage to minister with boldness and confidence. Strengthen and encourage your pastor through prayer and the anointing of God will remove every burden and break every yoke of bondage (Isaiah 10:27).

## Loyalty and Faithfulness

What a blessing faithful and loyal people are to a ministry. The sad thing is there are fewer faithful people in a typical church than those who are not. Scripture gives every indication that it has been this way from the beginning. In Ephesians 1:1, Paul addresses the Ephesians as "the saints which are at Ephesus, and the faithful in Christ Jesus."

In most churches twenty percent of the members carry the entire burden of the ministry. The only way a pastor can accomplish what God called him to do is to have faithful and loyal people behind him. He can't do it alone. Psalm 12:1 says, "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceases to be, for the faithful disappear from among the sons of men." Many church "folk" talk a good talk

but aren't there when the church needs them. Proverbs 20:6 says, "Many a man proclaims his own loyalty, but who can find a faithful man?" Proverbs 20:25 also says false declarations end up being a snare both spiritually and in the natural realm. "It is a snare for a man to devote rashly something as holy, and afterward to reconsider his vow."

How often have you made a commitment to the church and failed to follow through? Your pastor is depending on you. James 5:12 says, "Let your yes be yes, and your no, no." This includes your support during good times and bad. Many people are faithful, dedicated and loyal when things are going well in the church, but when things get hard, they're gone. What about when accusations are being hurled at your pastor? Do you stand firm in their defense? They need you whether what is being said is false, true or partially true. If you will be loyal and stand with them alongside God, you will have His support.

Isaiah 54:17 says, "No weapon formed against you shall prosper. And every tongue that rises up against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, And their righteousness (vindication) is from Me, declares the Lord." God will deal with anyone who comes against His servant. Let's always stand behind God's servants in full support. God promises His blessing will be upon all those who are faithful. Proverbs 28:20 says, "A faithful man will abound with blessing." The blessing will be there, just continue to stand firm behind your pastor through the rough times as well as the good. God will take care of anything that needs to be dealt with.

## Be Willing to Learn

Proverbs 9:8-9 says, "Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate you, rebuke a wise man and he will love you, give instruction to a wise man and he will be yet wiser, teach a just man and he will increase in knowledge." Having a teachable spirit is imperative if you want to be a blessing to the ministry and your pastor. It's very difficult to pastor someone who isn't willing to learn. One of the purposes of having a pastor is for them to be a spiritual leader and mentor to you.

Church members unwilling to learn will never increase in knowledge. They will be a continual thorn in the pastor and leadership's side. They fight everything the pastor tries to do. A resistant spirit can be felt. Often people have come to me and said they felt something was wrong but weren't sure what it was. Usually when this happened there was someone with a resistant spirit I was

battling with. They didn't know what was going on, but could feel something taking place in the spiritual realm.

The essence of discipleship is that of a learner and follower. Jesus is looking for disciples and not religious church members. Many of those that fought so much with Jesus were charter members of the local synagogue. Most of them just wanted to argue and prove their point. There were a few like Nicodemus who really wanted to learn, but they were far and few between. The whole point of being a disciple is to learn from one and teach someone else the thing you learned.

Paul taught Timothy this principle in 2 Timothy 2:2, "The things you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also." What any pastor really wants are disciples who have a thirst for learning and in turn will take what they have learned to minister to others. If you want to truly bless a pastor, become a disciple.

This is one of the reasons people refuse to join a church and be faithful. They feel they have no need of being disciplined. There's not much that anyone can teach them. Pride is at the core of this type of spirit and nothing good comes from it. On the other hand, it's the humble spirit that has a thirst for knowledge and feels they can always learn something new. This is the heart of a true disciple. It's this kind of attitude that is a real blessing to the pastor, church and its ministries. These are the kind of people that can be depended upon. They bring exceptional strength and support to the pastor.

## How to be a Blessing

The pastor gives of himself because he desires to be a blessing and usually isn't expecting anything in return. However, if something isn't given in return they may eventually become bitter and feel they are being taken advantage of. The Word is clear that we should bless those who have been a blessing to us.

Galatians 6:6 says, "Let him who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches." Romans 15:27 says, "It hath pleased them verily and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things." It's a spiritual principle that we should bless those who have blessed us spiritually.

We are indebted to them to do so. This is not just financially, but can be in many different ways.

1. **Send a card or note.** Paul said we should “share all good things with him who teaches” (Galatians 6:6). When your pastor or church leader has taught, said or done something that blessed you, let them know. Pastors often leave the pulpit feeling like a failure. They walk away from the service and the devil starts telling them how bad they did. One word of encouragement, from someone they have unknowingly ministered to, will break an accusing spirit. Let them know how much their ministry has blessed you.
2. **Meals and getaways.** Take your pastor and his family out for a good meal. This was how pastors used to receive much of their pay from the church. Better yet, give them a gift certificate so they can take their family out alone. This can be done by different individuals in the church but can also be done by the church corporately from time to time. A good gesture would be for the church to pay for a couple days away for the pastor and his wife just to refresh themselves. Along with covering their motel and a few meals, take up an offering to cover some spending money. Every pastor needs a couple of days away at least every quarter, besides vacations, just to get out from under the spiritual pressures of the ministry. Most people have no idea what kind of battles the average pastor and his family face on a daily basis.
3. **Special offerings.** The church should look for special occasions to express their love with a special offering. Special offerings for birthdays, Christmas, vacations, etc. let them know all they do for the church hasn’t gone unnoticed. These offerings should be done enough in advance that people have time to plan ahead for what they are going to contribute. Preferably church leaders take charge and make sure everyone has an opportunity to participate. It’s also a good idea to send a letter to church members with return envelopes so those who aren’t always in attendance can participate.

## Salary and Wages

Matthew 10:10 says, “The worker is worthy of his support.” The Bible makes it clear that people who sow into people’s lives spiritual things should be able to do so in hope of reaping material rewards (1 Corinthians 9:6-14, Romans 15:26-27). People in the ministry face pressure in spiritual and natural realms most can never comprehend. The last thing they need is the financial burden of figuring out how they’re going to survive.

Pastors should make as much as any professional in the church or community. Paul said, “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching” (1 Timothy 5:17). It’s clear from the context that “double honor” is referring to money or salary. If you take the average salary of the congregation, the pastor who works hard at preaching and teaching should make twice that. Churches that have a small budget should at least try to pay the pastor the average salary of the congregation.

## Ministry Expenses

Pastors should not have to take money out of their personal finances to do their job properly. Any expenses they need to minister effectively should be reimbursed over and above their salary. Below are a few types of ministry expenses that can be reimbursed.

1. **Auto expenses.** If the church isn’t able to provide a car for the pastor, along with the expenses to operate the car, it should reimburse his mileage. The IRS has a set amount that’s allotted per mile. Your pastor should receive at least that amount.
2. **Conference expenses.** There are usually one or two conferences per year in most denominations and fellowships. The pastor and his wife should attend these for their personal enrichment, to rekindle vision, for training, and accountability. This is an expense the church or ministry should take care of. If the church doesn’t have a credit card, receipts should be kept and everything that isn’t prepaid should be reimbursed.
3. **Housing.** The IRS says pastors can receive a housing allowance above their salary that is nontaxable. The only thing that must be paid on it is social security or self employment tax, unless they have been exempt from social security. The church or ministry should cover the pastor’s housing expenses above their salary. An accountant should be consulted to fully utilize this benefit.
4. **Insurance.** Insurance should be provided for pastors like any other professional. Many pastors and their families have suffered immense hardship and financial strain because they didn’t have health care. The church should do its best to provide comprehensive health care for their pastor. Also, the pastor’s family must be taken care of if unexpected tragedy strikes. God will bless the church and people who take care of the person God has given to

shepherd them. The church should provide a term or universal life insurance policy on both the pastor and his wife. Make sure the value is sufficient to take care of the family in case of an untimely death.

5. **Retirement.** A retirement plan like a 401K, IRA or insurance policy should be taken out in the pastor's name. Some churches put retirement plans in the church's name and the pastor is eventually left with nothing. This should never happen.

## Honor and Respect

Romans 13:7 says, "Render, therefore to all their due, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, and honor to whom honor." Hebrews 5:4 says, "No man takes this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God."

There's honor in being called by God and we are to give honor to whom honor is due. They are not better than anyone else, but respect is to be given for the office and calling. By showing respect for the pastor and church, we also show respect for God. God says the man of God should be honored not because they're better than everyone, but because of their calling.

Hebrews 5:1 says ministers are "taken from among men" who have the potential for failure just like the rest of us. When a judge enters a courtroom all rise to their feet. Why? Because it's expected and demanded. The church is a higher court. Let's restore honor and respect to the ministry. Below are a few areas we can all improve upon.

1. **Being on a first name basis.** Today, everyone is on a first name basis with the pastor. This is a definite show of disrespect for the ministry. Part of the problem is with pastors. We don't expect it. I used to feel the same. I wanted to be everyone's friend. I found out the hard way this causes many difficulties. When people really need help they need their pastor, not a friend. It also makes it difficult when you must assert pastoral authority. People can usually deal with things coming from their pastor, but it's much harder coming from a friend. I don't have any problem using "Pastor..." with their first name. That's a step in the right direction.
2. **Sanctity of church services.** Reverence and respect for God, the pastor, and the ministry should be upheld in all services. God and your pastor deserve this.

3. **Talking during services.** I can't count the times I've heard people carrying on conversations during worship services. They talk with their neighbor and wonder why they don't get anything out of the service. This is very disrespectful and distracts from what the Holy Spirit wants to do in people's lives.
4. **Allowing children to be disruptive.** Allowing children to be disruptive is disrespectful, distracting, and takes away from all the Lord wants to do. Today, most children are out of control and not disciplined at all. If kids or adults get up and down and roam around during the service people will be distracted and the purpose of God will be thwarted. Many parents think it's cute when their children are moving up and down the aisle. It isn't cute and the Lord is not pleased. They must be taught to respect the Lord, pastor and the church.
5. **Disrespecting the altar area.** The platform and altar is an area where sanctity must be preserved. It's a place where worship is led and the Word of God expounded. It should be off limits to anyone who is not there to minister. Children should never be allowed to play on the platform. It's not only disrespectful, but the equipment could be damaged or dangerous to the children.

God always blesses churches that take care of their pastor. He can't bless those that don't. Let's properly care for the men and women God has sent to watch over us.