

## Sermon - 7/22/2012 Role of the Pastor

As we, CBC, approach the arrival of a new pastor, hopefully sometime within the next several months, I want us this morning to look at the role and job of the Pastor - who or what is a Pastor as well as the role of a church toward her pastor. We will look at this based on much of what Paul says in I Cor 9 about the position of Apostle and the church's response to that position and see that the role of the church toward a pastor is similar in Paul's mind

It is a privilege and a bit awkward to speak on this subject as I am one of your pastors. And yet, I do so willingly. I have been in fulltime ministry for 36 years in various pastoral roles, as well as ministered to many pastors during these years. Over this time it has been very interesting to hear many different perspectives of the job and role of a pastor in many church members minds:

What a great job to have...what could be so hard about a job where you only have to work on Sundays and Wednesdays and get paid for full time...

Heard some say - pastors are basically lazy - easy work schedule, low stress...

I want to become a pastor so I can marry people...

I want to become a pastor so I can play more golf

I want to put up on the screen a couple of anagrams to help you see what the word Pastor stands for in various people's minds:

First - an anagram for the expectations a pastor feels the job calls for - or perhaps as some church members expect from this job called pastor:

P: Present at any and every church event. Omnipresent at times

A: Attentive to everyone's needs all at the same time

S: Socially proficient in every situation. Never a social faux pas

T: Theologically brilliant at all times

O: Omniscient - able to know all needs even before being expressed. Mind reader!

R: Respectful and accommodating of any and every person's preferences as regards church

Now - how the pastor really feels about this job:

P: Pressed down

A: Attacked

S: Stonewalled

T: Tested at every turn

O: On call 24/7

R: Run over and run down

Now - you may be sitting there saying - come on. This job can't possibly that bad. It is a great job and lifetime calling, etc. Well - let me give you some statistics: These figures are the results of over 18 years of a meta-research project and interviews with thousands of pastors by the Francis Schaeffer Institute of Church Leadership

Development, Fuller Theological Seminary, Focus on the Family and the Barna Research group.

- 98% of pastors had a close friend or seminary buddy who had left the ministry due to burnout, conflict in their church or from moral failure
- 89% have seriously considered leaving the ministry and 58% stated they would leave tomorrow if they had something else to go to
- 70+% of seminary or Bible school graduates who enter the ministry will leave the ministry within the first 5-8 years
- 71% state that they were burned out and that they battled depression beyond normal fatigue on a weekly or even daily basis
- 77% of pastors feel they do not have a good marriage
- 50% of pastors' marriages will end in divorce or permanent separation

Any wonder that 80% of pastors' spouses wish their spouse would leave the ministry. I could go on. The statistics are staggering. So let me ask you - is this the kind of job you want - or want for your children?

James kind of warns against taking on this role: 3:1 *Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly*

If you have never been in ministry, responsible for the spiritual growth of a group of people, it is very difficult for you to understand the weight of carrying spiritual authority. It is immense and it is draining.

The question for us is this - how can we as a church love our new pastor in such a way that he, and others on this staff, do not become a statistic?

First, let's look at the biblical idea or concept of pastor. The word pastor actually only occurs once in the New Testament, but the concept or synonym is throughout. The one occurrence is found in Eph 4:11 where Paul mentions a list of spiritual gifts:

*So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

In this verse Pastor is linked with teacher as it is in many other places. This word Pastor is literally shepherd or one who tends a flock and the idea is used in many places. Look with me at Act 20:28:

*Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood*

Verse 17 of Acts 20 tells us Paul is talking to the Elders of the church at Ephesus and that this role of shepherd - pastor fell to them.

Also I Tim 5:17 makes the same link: *The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.*

As you can see, though Pastor is used only once, the term to Paul and other NT writers was interchangeable with Leader/Teacher/Elder/Overseer

So - let's see what the scripture has to say about this role or job or function other than as a shepherd and the church's responsibility, or role, to the pastor.

Paul offers this charge to Tim in II Tim 4: *Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. 3 For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. 4 They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. 5 But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.*

A pastor must be able to teach the word of God with patience and understanding, being able to discern truth from error. And he must do so even in the face of hardships.

I Tim 4 gives the qualifications for elder which I won't go into here, but to sum it up, a pastor must be a person of integrity, humility and gentle strength.

How should we as a church respond to and treat a pastor? What is your responsibility toward him and his family?

In 1 Cor 9:4, 7

*Don't we have the right to food and drink? Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink the milk?*

Obviously Paul is asking rhetorical questions that assume a specific answer.

Then he gives this response: Vrs 8-12a, 13-14 *Do I say this merely on human authority? Doesn't the Law say the same thing? 9 For it is written in the Law of Moses: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." Is it about oxen that God is concerned? 10 Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us, because whoever plows and threshes should be able to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest. If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more?...*

*Don't you know that those who serve in the temple get their food from the temple, and that those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel*

Paul compares the OT Levitical practice of supporting the priests as an example of the Lord's directive concerning compensation for the messengers of the gospel. He goes so far as to say the Lord has commanded this. A pastor should expect to be taken care of materially by those to whom he has been given spiritual oversight.

Jesus says the same thing in Luke 10:7 *Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages.*

The idea is that, if at all possible, pastors should work full time in the preaching and teaching of God's word, being supported by those whom they serve.

Though the financial support is important, it is really not the most important responsibility of a church toward her pastor. We see a critical role of the church stated in Heb 13:17

*Obey your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.*

Several things I want to pull out of this verse for us this morning. First, the word obey used here means to be persuaded, to willingly listen as opposed to obey out of some demanded authority... Remember, according to scripture, it is Christ who gave some to be pastors and teachers, not the church. So, you are responding to this person as one who has been placed here by Jesus.

Secondly, remember that pastors/teachers will be judged more strictly according to James. The author of Hebrews says basically the same thing here with "who must give an account..." We, as pastors/teachers/ministry leaders are held accountable for those the Lord places in our care. And this spiritual authority is very weighty. We are all aware of God's word to Ezekiel in Chap 3:17-18: *"Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. When I say to a wicked man, 'You will surely die,' and you do not warn him or speak out to dissuade him from his evil ways in order to save his life, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood*

The principle of accountability is the same today for those of us called by the same God into ministry.

But why obey or have confidence in your pastor. The reason is clearly given in the last part of the verse - so that their work will be a joy and not a burden for that would be of no benefit for you. There is no benefit to the church to having a pastor overburdened and lacking joy about the ministry set before him.

Remember the statistics? Sadly the opposite is the norm. Most pastors work with little joy and huge burdens and the result - you receive little benefit in the long run.

You see, part of the problem in many churches is that we love the pastor's gifts - wow is he a good preacher or I love his teaching.. rather than loving the pastor for who he is. Think about this for yourself. I know you want to be loved for who you are, not just for what you do or bring to the table. It is the same for pastors, teachers and others in fulltime ministry...

Yes, let's appreciate all of our pastors gifts, but more importantly, let us love them. Our goal as a church should be to have a pastor filled with joy. Do we want our pastor first and foremost to meet our needs or to be a great husband and father if married with children? Do we first and foremost require him to attend all sorts of meetings or to be in deep, abiding fellowship with the heavenly Father? Let us regularly ask: Are our pastors leading with joy and is their leading a joy to us?

This is where you as a church can hold us accountable - to challenge us to be taking care of our own spiritual walk, our own families and ourselves...that we would minister to you with joy and passion...

Finally, as a followup to Heb 13:17 we read in vr 18: *Pray for us...* I am not sure I know of a better thing you can do than be lifting your pastors up on a regular basis before the throne of our Father, caring for us through the office of prayer. I speak for myself, but know I speak for all pastoral staff - we desperately need this.