

The Proper Care and Feeding of Your New Pastor

Discussion Questions

Paul instructs the church in 1 Timothy 5:17-18 that elders who lead well are worthy of double honor -- in what practical ways does your understanding of 'honor' need to expand beyond verbal appreciation to include tangible support?

The sermon draws a distinction between being 'hired' and being 'called' -- how does viewing your pastor as someone called by God rather than employed by the congregation change the way you relate to and support that person?

Much of a pastor's most significant work -- prayer, counseling, hospital visits, sermon preparation -- is invisible to the congregation; how might greater awareness of this hidden labor reshape the expectations you place on your minister?

The speaker suggests a paradigm shift: rather than the pastor revolving around the congregation, what would it look like for your church to genuinely believe that God has called your minister to your church partly because that minister needs the congregation to care for him?

Statistics cited in the sermon indicate that a significant number of pastors have seriously considered leaving ministry due to burnout and conflict -- what specific responsibilities does this place on individual church members, not just church leadership?

The sermon emphasizes that a sustainable ministry over 25 years is more valuable than an intense ministry that burns out in five -- how does this long-term perspective challenge the way churches typically evaluate pastoral 'productivity' or success?

The speaker shares that one of the greatest gifts his ministry years gave him was children who love the Lord and the church -- what does this reveal about the hidden cost that unhealthy church environments can place on a pastor's family?

Charles Spurgeon is quoted as saying he rejoices that Jesus forgives even the sins of his sermons -- how does this reminder of pastoral fallibility and dependence on grace affect the grace you extend to your own minister when sermons or decisions fall short?

The sermon closes by reminding the congregation that the pastor is not the chief shepherd and that Christ alone saves and owns the flock -- how does keeping Christ central prevent a church from placing either too much burden or too much authority on a single pastor?

Paul uses the image of an ox threshing and a laborer worthy of wages to make the case for fair compensation of ministers -- what does it say about a congregation's theology and values if its financial support of ministry staff does not keep pace with its stated appreciation for them?

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5-Day Devotional

Day 1: Honoring the Work of Ministry

Reading: 1 Timothy 5:17-18

Devotional: Paul reminds the church that those who labor in preaching and teaching deserve genuine honor. The word "labor" carries the weight of strenuous, exhausting effort. What we witness on Sunday morning is only the visible surface of an unseen life of study, prayer, and preparation. Much of pastoral ministry happens in the quiet, invisible hours. Consider how easily we consume the fruit of someone else's labor without acknowledging its cost. Ask God to cultivate in you a spirit of genuine gratitude for those who handle His word faithfully on your behalf.

Reflection: What invisible labor in your church have you taken for granted?

Practical Application: Write a note of sincere thanks to a minister or teacher who has shaped your faith.

Day 2: The Shepherd and the Flock

Reading: 1 Peter 5:1-4, where Peter calls elders to shepherd God's flock willingly, not under compulsion, serving as examples rather than lords over those entrusted to their care, with the promise that the Chief Shepherd will reward faithful service.

Devotional: The image of the shepherd is not passive. It involves vigilance, sacrifice, and a willingness to stand between the flock and whatever threatens it. Your pastor carries that weight daily, not for recognition, but because he has been called. Yet Scripture is clear that Christ alone is the Chief Shepherd. The pastor serves under that authority, not above it. The health of a congregation depends on understanding this distinction. When we honor our pastor rightly, we are honoring the One who sent him.

Reflection: In what ways have you looked to your pastor to fill a role that only Christ can fill?

Practical Application: Spend time in prayer acknowledging Christ as the head of your church, and ask Him to give your pastor wisdom and endurance.

Day 3: Bearing One Another's Burdens

Reading: Galatians 6:1-2, 6, where Paul instructs believers to restore those who stumble gently, to carry one another's burdens, and specifically to share all good things with those who teach them the word.

Devotional: The burden of ministry is real. Statistics remind us that a significant portion of pastors have considered leaving ministry altogether due to burnout and conflict. The church is not meant to be a place where ministers are consumed and discarded, but where burdens are shared. Paul's instruction to share good things with those who teach is not a suggestion but a command rooted in the mutual life of the body of Christ. A congregation that carries its minister's burdens creates the conditions for long, fruitful, faithful ministry.

Reflection: What burdens might your pastor be carrying right now that you have never considered?

Practical Application: Commit to praying specifically for your pastor's family this week, by name, each day.

Day 4: Protecting Those Who Serve

Reading: Romans 15:1-3, where Paul instructs the strong to bear with the weaknesses of those without strength, not pleasing themselves, following the example of Christ who did not please Himself but bore reproach for the sake of others.

Devotional: Ministry families live in a unique and often difficult position. Children of ministers grow up aware of the tensions surrounding their parent's work. Spouses carry the weight of their partner's calling alongside their own. The church has a responsibility to protect and honor these families, not simply tolerate them. When we treat a minister's spouse or child as a vehicle for our grievances, we dishonor Christ's servant. The strong bearing with the weak applies not only to doctrinal differences but to the daily exercise of patience and grace toward those who serve among us.

Reflection: Have you ever used a minister's family member as a way to communicate a complaint?

Practical Application: Look for one practical way to show kindness to a minister's family this month, whether through a meal, an encouraging word, or an act of service.

Day 5: Ministering to Those Who Minister

Reading: Philippians 4:14-19, where Paul expresses deep gratitude for the Philippians' partnership in his need, acknowledging their generosity as a fragrant offering pleasing to God, and trusting that God will supply all their needs according to His riches.

Devotional: The most profound picture in the New Testament church is not simply a pastor serving a congregation, but a congregation and pastor serving one another. The Philippians did not merely receive from Paul. They gave to him, supported him, and partnered with him in a way that moved him deeply. What would it look like for your church to adopt that same posture toward those called to serve among you? The ministry is sustainable when the body of Christ functions as designed, each member honoring and supporting the others, with Christ at the center of it all.

Reflection: Has your church adopted a posture of partnership with its ministers, or one of passive consumption?

Practical Application: Discuss with your life group or family one tangible way your community can actively support and encourage your pastor and church staff this month.