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THE PASTOR:

Pastor to Pastor

In this section, my goal is to share some insights which I learned over the years while I was a pastor. Some things I discovered myself and others I have read about or heard. The insights listed below are for your consideration, and I hope that you will find them helpful in your ministry. If a statement is not mine, and I know its source, I will credit the source. If I do not know the source, next to it I have stated “unknown.” If it is something which I personally discovered while in ministry, then nothing will be noted.

Areas of Responsibility:

Dr. Gene Getz stated that a pastor has three main areas of responsibility. They are:

1. Preaching/teaching
2. Administration
3. Shepherding

He said that he has never met a pastor who could do all three well; they usually can only do two of them well (Dr. Gene Getz, pastor, professor and author).

I have found this to be true. Generally if a pastor is capable in two of these three areas, he will lack in the third. The best scenario is a pastor who lacks in the area of administration. He likely can find someone with administrative skills who can help him or completely take over this area of responsibility for him. Such a person can administer the church under his guidance and direction. If a pastor is weak in the area of shepherding, then it is to his advantage to have other people (such as the church elders) assist him in visitation, counseling, etc. If a pastor is weak in the area of preaching and teaching, this could hinder his ministry considerably. If this is the case, it is possible that he is not working hard enough at this aspect of his ministry (cf. 1 Tim. 5:17), or he is not called of God to be a pastor (1 Tim. 3:2, “able to teach”). The ability to teach is an important aspect of a pastor's ministry (Eph. 4:11-13; 1 Tim. 4:11,13; 2 Tim. 4:2). I have heard of situations where the pastor was not a good teacher, but because of his love for his people, he was loved and accepted by them.

My suggestion is that in whichever area you are weak, especially in the area of preaching and teaching, find someone who is skilled in that area and ask him to help you develop skills and/or assist you in this capacity. You could also read a book on the topic as well as take a class on homiletics if one is available.

Board Meetings:

Board meetings on a monthly basis are generally sufficient for the average church. The only time board meetings need to take place more than once a month is when the church is in the midst of a crisis. Too many board meetings can cause extra stress and strain, which is unnecessary for the pastor and board members. There are generally three reasons, other than a crisis situation, why they might meet more than once a month. First, when the church is being poorly administered these meetings may be necessary. The second reason may be when the pastor or board likes tight control over everything which goes on in the church, so they meet often to maintain this control. This is not a good situation. Third, the board members just like getting together for fellowship. This can be fine if it does not take away time from their families' needs.

Character:

- A pastor needs to be reliable, trustworthy and punctual. He should be a person whom other people can trust and look up to. If he does not, then his ministry will not make a great impact for Christ.
- A pastor must be one who does not have a fear of man (cf. Pro. 29:25). A pastor who does is worthless in his position for he will respond to the wishes and desires of men rather than God. But a pastor who fears God and not man, will be blessed in all that he does (Psa. 25:12; 112:1; 118:6; 128:4).

Church Finances:

A pastor should never be involved in the handling of the church finances. Although one man should be in charge of this area, the elders as a whole should oversee this aspect of the ministry along with the pastor (cf. 2 Cor 8:16-23). They are to give an accounting of the money received and how it was utilized. If there is ever a problem where church money is mishandled, then no one will be able to accuse the pastor. This will help maintain his integrity and the integrity of his ministry. This can also help a pastor avoid the temptation to use church money for personal needs and desires.

Church Organization:

* God never meant the pastor to be the church's only leader. Although he is the senior leader, he is to be one of a number of elders. This is important for a pastor to understand because this gives him the opportunity to share the responsibilities of the church with other godly men (his elders); men who will pray for and with him, assist him, and help him to carry the burden of the church. This system of leadership alle-

viates stress and the overworking of the pastor. A pastor should share his responsibilities and burdens with the other elders of his church.

* Gene Getz stated that the church consists of families which he calls churches in miniature (Dr. Gene Getz, pastor, professor and author). If the small churches (families) are not strong and healthy, then the main church will not be strong and healthy either. This is why it is important for the church as a whole to work at building strong and healthy families.

House Calls:

Though a pastor is a servant of the church, he does not have to drop everything whenever the phone rings and someone in the church wants something. A pastor needs to weigh each situation and determine how, when, and if he will respond. Even though the caller may think that his world is falling apart, this does not mean that the pastor has to race to his side. The best thing might be for the pastor to talk with the person for a little while and set up an appointment for a later time. It may also happen that if the pastor does not deal with the situation immediately, that over time it will simply be resolved without his intervention. A pastor may also send someone else who is capable of helping the caller.

This issue is also important for a pastor to keep in mind in regards to his family. His family is his primary ministry. If his family falls apart, then he will no longer have a ministry (1 Tim. 3:4-5; Titus 1:6). He needs to carefully consider whether the problem the caller has is more important than what he is doing or will shortly do with his family. Many pastors schedule times when people can call or visit them to deal with personal issues. Only in a crisis situation should these calls take precedence.

Membership Meetings:

It is important to gather the membership of the church together annually to discuss the church's ministries, finances, goals, and other issues. This should be done at the end of each year. At this time the members may be given the opportunity to vote on deacons and deaconesses whom the elders may recommend for serving in the church. A church may also want to have at least two other meetings during the year to keep the members informed of church business. Generally these meetings should be informational and for input, but not for the purpose of making final decisions. That is the job of the church board. The only time more meetings may be necessary is when the church is experiencing difficulties.

Office Hours:

It is good for a pastor to set up times during the week when people can call and make appointments to see him. This is important so that he will not be constantly interrupted when he is preparing sermons or Bible studies. Doing this will give him undisturbed quality time alone with the Lord, which in the end will greatly benefit the church. It is helpful for a pastor to state these times, letting the people of the church know why he is doing this and that these are the best times they can contact him (except in the case of an emergency).

Pastor's Job:

- A pastor's job is to cause pain; just enough pain so that it causes a person to grow, but not so much pain that he recoils (unknown). This was an interesting statement to me and a truthful one. A pastor's job is to help his people leave the comfort zones they have built around themselves and are accustomed to. If they stay in them, they will not grow in their faith; for in their striving to remain comfortable, important uncomfortable things such as ministry will suffer, not getting accomplished. A pastor is to find ways to gently move them from where they are to a more uncomfortable position so they can grow. However he is not to cause so much discomfort that they shrink back from being involved in ministry in the future.
- A pastor's job is to do what the people of the congregation are incapable of doing (unknown). This is also true. If a member of your church can do something, even if they cannot do it as well as you can, you should allow them to do it in order to develop as a person in their service for Christ. The only time this would not be a good idea is when something is critical and of utmost importance. Then it is best done by you or by someone else who is skilled at that task. As a pastor, you do not need to be involved in every aspect of every ministry. God has gifted the members of your church with spiritual gifts as well (1 Cor. 12:7,11). If you do everything, then you will rob them of the opportunity and joy of serving God. You will have enough other responsibilities to carry out that others may not be qualified or gifted to do. In addition, it is your job to equip the saints in the body of Christ to enable them to do the work of the ministry (Eph. 4:11-13). Therefore learn to trust people with responsibility, even though this may be hard for you to do.
- The average pastor can minister effectively to 80 or 90 people. If he has to minister to more than this, he will not be able to do the job well, and people in the church will eventually suffer (Unknown). He only has enough time, ability and energy to expend to meet the needs of a limited number of people. When he has to meet the needs of more people than he is capable of ministering to, more than likely he will suffer, the church will suffer, and his family will suffer. Therefore when a church gets larger than the number of people one pastor can effectively minister to, he needs to be sharing his responsibilities with his elders. Or the church should consider adding another pastor to its staff.
- A pastor is not to assume the place of God. He is not to go beyond the boundaries of the Scriptures and force people to live according to his standards and desires. God never meant for a pastor to be a dictator. It is not his job to control the lives of the people in his church as if he were the Holy Spirit. For example, it is not his place to tell a husband and wife how many children they are to have; if, how, and when they can have sexual relations. It is not his responsibility to attempt to control every aspect of the lives of the members of his church, putting them under bondage as the scribes and Pharisees did (Mat. 23). A pastor's job is to teach what the Bible teaches, to shepherd, and to make sure that any church members in major sin are disciplined (see the chapter titled, "Church Discipline"). For these responsibilities he will one day give an account (Heb. 13:17), but he will not be held accountable for the thoughts or actions of his church

members. That is their responsibility, and they will give an accounting to Jesus, not the pastor.

- A pastor's main job is to love his people. A pastor's love for his people is foundational to his ministry. If a pastor does not love his people, then he will not shepherd them with love. Instead he may drive them and treat them like a herd of cattle. He may use and abuse them, or he may simply neglect them. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for His sheep (John 10:11) and who knows them (John 10:14). This is the attitude a pastor is to have for his sheep: "shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of God*; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock" (1 Pet. 5:2-3). A pastor who loves his sheep will be loved in return and followed by his sheep.
- A church generally will take on the personality of its pastor, because he sets an example of what a Christian is by how he acts and lives. His relationship with his congregation is like that of a parent with his children. Because this is true, a pastor needs to be careful of the example he sets, just as a father does with his children. He has to answer the question: "Do I want to reproduce disciples who resemble me and manifest my character?" The Apostle Paul openly stated that he set the example for the believers in the churches which he started (2 Thes. 3:7,9; 1 Tim. 1:16), stating to the Philippians: "Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us" (Php. 3:17). Paul also told Timothy (1 Tim. 4:12) and Titus (Titus 2:7) to be examples to fellow believers. Pastors need to realize that they are in an influential position in which they are a living standard for their flock to observe. They are a role model. Therefore they need to consider what kind of a role model they are.

Personal Planner:

Pastors need to plan their work and work their plan. A pastor should not allow his life to be controlled by the demands of life or the whims of others. Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he should determine what he needs to accomplish each day and/or week and lay out a prayerful plan with the goal of getting these things accomplished. He should also lay out a yearly plan for the church, possibly having a large one-year-at-a-glance calendar hanging on his office wall where he can write in all of the important events of the year. It is also beneficial to carry a small yearly calendar or pocket PC in order to schedule appointments, events, etc., to help organize and remember his schedule. This will make his life and that of others more orderly and less stressful.

Preaching Schedule:

A pastor is the church's teaching elder (Eph. 4:11) who is responsible for the preaching/teaching ministry of his church. As the teaching elder, he should be the one who preaches the majority of sermons throughout the year because God has gifted and called him for this work. When he takes this responsibility seriously, he is then able to plan months in advance what books of the Bible he feels led to preach and teach. Therefore, he is able to develop a strategic plan for the growth and

needs of his church with specific goals and then execute them. Too often giving this responsibility to others takes away from the potency and continuity of the pastor's ministry.

Women:

A pastor needs to be careful in his relationships with women. He needs to keep a safe emotional distance from them. He should never allow a woman in his church to become dependent upon him, no matter how needed and good this makes him feel. It is only a recipe for disaster. This can occur when the relationship between a pastor and his secretary or a woman he is counseling, etc., becomes too close. They can become attracted to one another and possibly fall into sin. Another scenario which can occur is when a woman publicly accuses the pastor of a relationship with her, even though this has not happened. This may result from an emotional bond with him. She may do this with the goal of destroying his marriage, possibly hoping to begin a relationship with him if his wife leaves him. She may also do this out of bitterness or revenge, wanting to destroy his ministry if she is not receiving from him the attention she desires (cf. 1 Pet. 5:8-9). There are many reasons why a pastor needs to be careful of such relationships. Therefore a pastor needs to build a barrier around himself to protect himself, his family and the integrity of his ministry. Many pastors have had to leave the ministry because of similar situations (cf. 1 Cor. 9:24-27).