

CARING FOR PASTORS AND MINISTERS

Throughout the month of October, Christian churches across the nation will be honoring their pastors, ministers and their families. In doing this, we stand on solid Biblical ground. Paul told the Thessalonians to "recognize those who labor among you...esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." 1 Thessalonians 5:12,13.

Clergy Appreciation Month is not about idolizing or worshipping the pastor nor is it an attempt to put the pastor or minister on a pedestal. As much as we are to love our pastors and those who serve among us they are not and never will be our Savior. To God and Him only be the Glory!

During October, churches will be honoring their leaders with gifts, banquets, special services and Appreciation events. This is as it should be. If you need help in coming up with ideas to encourage your preacher go to www.parsonage.com.

Not only must we set aside these special times of showing our love and appreciation but we must also give as much attention to the LONG-TERM CARE OF OUR PASTORS AND MINISTERS. (These suggestions are adapted from Focus on the Family's Clergy Appreciation Guide).

1. Establish a Pastoral Care Team to walk along side of the pastor and his family throughout the year.
2. Provide fair and adequate salary, compensation and retirement benefits for the pastoral family. Your pastor and his family should be free of financial pressure.
3. Allow time off for Professional Development. Your pastor and his wife should be encouraged in their training endeavors and they should go with more than the church's permission. They should go with an enthusiastic blessing!
4. Allow adequate time for rest, restoration, refreshing and renewal. The pastor can not be on call, 24/7. Honor his need for private time alone and with his family and friends. Insist that your pastor take the Sabbath rest. There will be times when your pastor and his spouse will need extended time away. Encourage this!
5. Give your pastor freedom to dream, encouragement to lead and even make mistakes. The worst thing that can happen is to "shut him down" and "tie his hands." Avoid an adversarial relationship between the pastor and lay leadership. Provide a safe place when the pastor can make mistakes, because failure is inevitable.
6. Be willing to share the load of ministry responsibility. The need is for load-bearing brothers and sisters not gossips, critics and "Monday morning quarterbacks."
7. Continually Cover Your Pastor with Prayer, Blessings and Encouragement. Love your pastors as Jesus loves them. Show your care in loving ways. Earnestly pray God's protection and covering over him and his family.
8. Do your part in Creating a Loving, Caring Atmosphere around your pastor and his family. Work to minimize stress. Be a stress buster rather than a stress booster.
9. Give Special Attention to the Pastor's Family. Release them from unrealistic expectations. Be a true friend to the entire family. Don't expect his family to be any more perfect than your own.
10. Support Pastoral Care-giving Ministries. Pastors do burn out. At time, they will need care-giving assistance. Encourage them to go for counseling when needed. This is nothing to be ashamed of. Facilitate such care by providing the financial assistance. Encourage your pastor and his wife to "pull aside" for clergy and family enrichment. There are several beautiful retreat settings serving pastors.

Dr.H.B. London, Vice President of Pastoral Ministries said, "Affirmation is a luxury. Whether we receive it or not should never color our attitude or actions." Amen!

The Apostle Paul revealed his pastoral heart when he said, "And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved."

Enough said! Start by thanking your pastor this Sunday.