

Reciprocal Relations of Pastor and People

Revival In the Home Ministries, Inc.

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Preface

Like most pastors, I learned very little about the local church while in Bible College. In fact, most pastors begin their ministry with very little knowledge of the relationships of Pastor and People as set forth in the Word of God. It is very sad that many of the problems churches have are due to the fact that few of God's people are aware of their responsibility to their pastor. And few pastors teach what God expects.

We would all say that the greatest joy in Christian service is being in a church where the relationship between the pastor and the people is like "heaven on earth." What a great blessing when people really follow their pastor and when pastors lead in a Biblical way that God can honor.

The writing of this book came out of the desire to teach the "whole counsel of God," and to prepare the people of churches I have pastored so that God could bless. Churches are ordained of God. This very thought makes the responsibility of pastor and people an "awe-inspiring thing." May God use this book to help many churches become what He wants them to be. May it be used to strengthen the pastor's hand and the people's heart and will to follow their godly pastor.

The Pastor's Position

One of the most important relationships in life is the relationship of pastor and people. Paul spoke much of this relationship -- much of his writing in the Epistles set forth this relationship and position. Today it is equally important, for much of the weal and woe for churches comes when the proper relationship is not understood and applied.

Life is made up of relationships. With doctors, educators, professional men -- at work, in the shops, stores, homes, and schools. So the church is also a place of important relationships. We can live in the right relationship best if we know what the Word of God teaches. Let's look at what the Bible teaches about the "reciprocal relationship of pastor and people."

To have a right relationship, there must first of all be an understanding of the pastor's position. Then the people will know what to expect of the pastor, what to look for in a pastor, and what God expects from them as an outgrowth of these things.

A preacher for the church—Ephesians 4:11. Pastors are given the gift to preach divine truth. This is an inspiring, arousing work, for their responsibility is to awaken the conscience of the people for the purpose of conversion and Christian living. Romans 12:6,7 indicates that the pastor is to be active in this ministry.

The pastor is above all the preacher. He has to be the preacher of God's Word before he can be the pastor. His pastoral work will be empty if he is not a preacher, for there would be none to preach to or to pastor. The example in Acts is both public and private preaching—in public and house to house. Study also I Timothy 2:7 and II Timothy 1:11.

An evangelist to reach the lost—Acts 21:8; II Timothy 4:5; Ephesians 4:11. The pastor is to do the work of an evangelist. An evangelist is one who proclaims the good news of the Gospel. While Timothy was a pastor, he was to excel as an evangelist.

This part of the pastor's work is of great importance. Seeking the lost is a very needed element of the pastor's work. Some are called especially to do the work of an evangelist and give their whole life effort to this ministry. They are the full time evangelists.

The pastor of the church flock—Ephesians 4:11. The term "*pastor*" is the one most often used in Scripture. It designates the person who has the responsibility of feeding and caring for the flock. He is the person who leads a flock, or church, that is already established. As pastor he feeds the flock of God (I Peter 5:2,3; Acts 20:17,28). He is an overseer of their spiritual needs. He watches, protects, guides, and rules in self-sacrificing love and sympathy. The Greek word "*pomen*" indicates a pastor-shepherd. This implies that he not only leads, but instructs, corrects, and "*sets straight*" the group of sheep as he teaches biblical doctrine. As a pastor, he works with the same spirit of love that Christ demonstrates as our "*Good Shepherd*."

A teacher of the church body—Ephesians 4:11. As closely related work to pastoring, teaching is a ministry that the pastor must continually carry on. Each church should be a Bible school where each Christian is taught from God's Word.

Teaching is a distinctive gift. The Greek word "*didaskalos*" means a teacher in "*guidance of the Word*" to hearts and lives. I Timothy 5:17 says that the pastor-teacher should be "*laboring in word and doctrine*." As a pastor, Timothy was urged to labor in doctrine, in teaching (I Timothy 4:6, 11, 13, 15-16).

An elder or presiding officer. The Greek term "*presbuteros*" means one who presides, one who rules; a moderator of the church (I Timothy 5:17; Acts 11:30; 20:17; Titus 1:5). The elder was the presiding officer of the Jewish synagogue and the term was transferred in usage to the assembly of the local church.

The pastor has an administrative office in addition to his labors as preacher, shepherd, and teacher. His authority is a regulative one rather than strictly a judicial one. A ruling elder is the specific function of the one who is pastor.

An overseer, or bishop -- Titus 1:7. The Greek term "*episkopos*" means "*to look after, to superintend*." The application is that of a superintendent of a working force. The local bishop is the spiritual guide and administrator of the church. God has invested the pastor with this administrative work (I Peter 2:25; Acts 20:28; Philippians 1:1; I Timothy 3:2).

None of these titles, positions, and aspects of the pastor office are for the purpose of setting him up as a superior being. The pastor is not better than the laity, nor is he a task-master. There is no such term as laity in the Word of God, that is a man-made idea. All are priests unto God, but not all have the same office to fulfill in God's will. But these are the official rights, the honorable place that God has given the pastor as a service to his flock.

None of these offices are of a "priest" in the sense of the Roman Catholic teaching. We who are saved are all priests unto God, as intercessors for the needs of others (I Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:6). Nor is the office that of merely a guide, a philosopher, or a friend, but one who is called to deal with eternal truths.

A pastor's ministry is an awesome one that merits the people's prayers. Indeed, all of God's people ought to be prayer warriors for their own pastor. The ministry is fraught with temptations, difficulties, and Satan is always there to defeat the pastor.

The Pastor's Responsibility

As an outgrowth of his positions the pastor has certain responsibilities to the people of his church. Accountability comes only from responsibility; God will hold the pastor responsible. He is responsible because he knows that for which he is accountable before God.

A faithful ministry of the Word of God. The pastor must seek to have a well-rounded ministry. He should set forth the various facets of truth in the Word, declaring the whole counsel of God because he is a steward of the mysteries of God (II Corinthians 4:5; Acts 20:27).

A faithful teaching ministry. His teaching and preaching should be personal, vital, and forceful. His goal should be to train faithful men who will *"be able to teach others also"* (I Timothy 2:2). As he labors in doctrine, he will earnestly teach and proclaim it. He will teach the enduring principles of the truth of God's Word so that the will, affections, and spirit of the Christians will be affected. He will teach his people to *"observe all things"* (Matthew 28:18-20). (It would be good to note all that Paul wrote to Timothy a young pastor at the church in Ephesus -- study I and II Timothy.)

A faithful proclamation to reach the lost. The pastor will have such a burden for the lost that he will lead and teach others how to win souls. The pastor's responsibility before God is to be a soul-winning pastor, an evangelist. Paul commanded Timothy to do the work of an evangelist. (II Timothy 4:5)

A faithful ministry as pastor. The pastor will be a true shepherd, a lover of souls. He will feed and nourish his flock, instructing them in divine truth. He will have sympathy for the needs of others, a burden for God's people that will lead him to pray earnestly for them. He will watch, protect, guide, and rule in spiritual things. He will apply God's Word in cases of spiritual illness, need, error, and sin. In self-sacrifice he will freely give himself to his people. (Acts 20:17-35, Gal. 4:19, and I Thess. 2:1-13 are very interesting and instructive at this point.)

A faithful administrator. The pastor will look after, inspect, oversee, and lead his working force. As he supervises and leads he will guide the direction of the total church. If things go wrong, he is responsible to God and accountable to him. He is to be the promoter and administrator!

The People's Responsibility to the Pastor

Out of the position and responsibilities of the pastor come also the responsibilities of the people. They, too, are accountable to God for the Word is clear as to the areas of their responsibility. When God gives a pastor to a church there are normal, natural relationships that the people sustain just as there are when a child is born into a family or a person is saved (Eph. 2:8-10; II Cor. 5:17; Rom. 8:1-17).

Let's note just what God requires of His people, all of them, regardless of their office in the church.

Know him — I Thessalonians 5:12. Implied here is the desire to really know the pastor. Some people stay at arm's length away from their pastor. They do not want to know him, but rather almost have an animosity to him. But how can a pastor be a help and encouragement to such people if they will not open their hearts to him? To know him means to have a sense of his burdens, his problems, his work, and position, his needs as an individual and as a family.

Esteem him highly—I Thessalonians 5:13. What does the pastor mean to you? Do

you have “roast preacher” each Sunday for lunch? How do you talk of him before your children? Do you ridicule him? Do you feel your pastor never does right? To some critical laymen this may seem true.

Instead you should esteem your pastor. You should pray for him, believe in him, back him up, stand by him, and treat him generously in every way. You should be grateful for his work for love's sake. As you show your appreciation and your love by acts of kindness, the Lord will bless you (Philippians 4:15-19).

Support him well— I Timothy 5:17-19. The Word of God commands us to support our pastor. If the pastor labors in the Word, in doctrine, then be sure that he is counted for double honor. Verse 18 says *"The laborer is worthy of his reward."* Any pastor who is doing his work as God's man is worthy of the support of God's people.

Some churches give so little care, they certainly would not want to receive as they give. If the laymen put in the same hours as the pastor and received the same pay, they'd possibly quit their jobs. The people of the church should show their pastor that they love and appreciate him. Too few churches are considerate of God's servant. We may talk of having God's love, but it is idle talk unless it is expressed in action.

Never listen to his critic! -- Timothy 5:19. The Bible says that you are not even to receive an accusation against an elder, but before two or three witnesses. Never allow yourself to listen to the gossip and criticism of your pastor. Tell that critical person if they want to come to you with their gripes, they must tell you before two or three others that you will have with you. This will stop the tongues, the slander, the gossip, and tale bearing. The insinuations which are not founded on fact but are injuriously told will then stop.

If the pastor is in error give him a fair trial. Pray for him, ask God to change him if he needs it. If you have a helpful criticism to give, give it only to his face and then in love. Never speak ill of him behind his back and don't listen to others who do either.

Follow the pastor's example— Hebrews 13:7. *"Remember them, who rule over you, who have spoken the Word of God."* Follow their faith, follow a true man of God. Let him be your leader in the real sense of the word. Give consideration to the pastor's manner of life as a pattern for yourself: in integrity, in sincerity, in endurance, in patience, in steadfastness, in surrender, in dedication, in abounding in the work of the Lord.

Obey them who are over you—Hebrews 13:7. Obey them who would guide you. God has given the call to leadership to your pastor. He is the one who must watch for your soul, as one who must give account. Will the account be given with joy, or with grief? It is largely up to you. No pastor can be a pastor to you or your family unless you allow him to be. If you hold him off, and reject the Word of God through him, very little can he do to really pastor you.

To obey is a command of God and is hard for some to accept. If the pastor preaches and applies the Word of God to your life and it hurts, it is still for your good. If the pastor has concern for your spiritual welfare, he can only preach and teach the Word of God as the Holy Spirit directs him.

The Principle of Authority

Throughout the Word of God, the basic, but neglected, principle of authority is taught. When you study the position of the prophets of old, the position of Moses the "man of God" who led the Israelite nation, the position of Elijah, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, you realize that God vests His authority in a man whom He calls.

There are many areas of authority that we neglect to teach, accept, or practice today. It is this basic lack of submission to authority that is ruining the world today. It is the cause of the breakdown of the home and the ruin of children. Let's consider the principles of authority in God's Word in this last section.

God in authority—Jude 25. God is a Sovereign God (Ephesians 1:19; Matthew 28:18). He is our God with all rights (Ephesians 1:17-23). He has the power and authority to do as He wishes after the counsel of His own will (Ephesians 1:11).

God invests certain authority in others. God has put authority in the man (Ephesians 5:23,33). He is the "head" over the wife. He is the "head" over his own home, over his children. He is the "head" over the creation (Genesis 1:230; Genesis 2:15-19, 20).

God has put authority in the man of God, the pastor (Hebrews 13:7,17). The pastor as overseer and teacher is placed where God wants him to be. He is in God's hand (Revelation 1:20). He is "*called, or ordained*" of God (John 15:16). He is to be obeyed, followed, esteemed, and submitted to. (Hebrew 13:7, 17)

God expects us to yield to His invested authority. When a child obeys his parents, it is like obeying God. He obeys his parents as "in the place" of the Lord. Literally the parent is the authority to the child in the place of God, and His Word, until the child is old enough to be on his own. Then as an adult, he transfers that authority to others now over him, maybe a boss, to a husband (for a girl), to the pastor, and especially to the Word of God and will of God for his life.

When a wife obeys her husband, it is "*in the Lord.*" (Eph. 5:21-24) To obey her husband is counted as obedience to the Lord. The Lord is over the husband, and the husband is over the wife. Therefore, the obedient wife is obedient to her husband, as "*unto the Lord.*" (I Cor. 11:3)

When people in a church obey the pastor and his leadership, they do so because it is the will of God. When they submit themselves (Hebrews 13:7,17), it is "*in the will of God.*" When they consider the pastor's manner of life and pattern their lives after "*the man of God,*" they do so in the will of God. When they submit their lives and wills to the direction of a godly man of God, they are trusting him as "*in the will of God.*" For that is God's express will for us.

Conclusion

Consider my friend, that God works on the human level. God uses people to bring the gospel to people. God uses people to lead people. He never commands us to follow our own inclinations, our own will, our own desires, but to follow a godly man of God. As Paul wrote, "*Follow me, as I follow Christ*" (I Corinthians 11:1). God uses people to lead people in every strata and area of life.

Israel was to follow the godly leaders whom He raised up. When Israel was called a "theocracy," He raised up prophets and priests through whom He led His people. It was not God's will that they should have kings, but to have a spiritual man of God as the one whom they would follow and obey (I Samuel 8:1-22). Their obedience unto the prophet was considered as obedience unto God Himself. Obedience unto a "man of God" is the same today.

In closing, let me say, that Paul wrote to the Corinthians church, "*What will ye? Shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?*" (I Corinthians 4:21). God puts authority in His man whom He calls. And this was especially true of the apostles who were the very foundation of the church. Also read I Thessalonians 2:19-20. If the pastor is teaching the Word of God, declaring the "*whole counsel*" and is a man of prayer and of the Spirit's leading, the people can and should trust him and submit to that leadership fully.

Satan may try to make people think that their pastor has ulterior, personal motives for teaching on this subject. Please remember that this study has been prepared because: 1). Pastors are accountable to God to teach this relationship and not shirk their God-given duty and 2) problems come for many churches because of a lack of teaching in this area. 3). Some of the sweetest relationships in life can and ought to be between pastor and people.