Teaching for 10-17-07

Neither a Hireling nor a King

Attitudes toward pastors vary greatly from congregation to congregation; from tradition to tradition. Often these attitudes are not grounded in the true biblical perspective of a pastor's calling and role in the Church. They are attitudes that need to be confronted if the Church is to remain spiritually healthy.

There are those in the church who regard their pastors as "hirelings." They believe pastors are hired to run the affairs of the church, preach sermons, visit the sick, and keep the flock "happy." This form of congregational self-centeredness manifests itself in such expressions as, "We hired him—and we can fire him." Their view is that the pastor's primary job is to take care of their needs and respond to their wishes.

The other extreme is congregation members who treat the pastor as if he or she is the ultimate authority. They believe that regardless of the pastor's behavior there is an "infallibility" that keeps the pastor from being held accountable. This leads to personal kingdom-building, pride, and the potential for spiritual abuse.

Looking at the landscape of the Church, we can observe some variety of both extremes. To guard against the *hireling* or *king* perspectives overtaking the church, we must be diligent in how we pray for pastors in these extremely challenging days.

October is Clergy Appreciation Month, which began in 1993 as an effort to recognize and honor ministers. Later, with the support of such ministries as Focus on the Family and the National Day of Prayer Task Force, Clergy Appreciation Month gained greater momentum. Last year an estimated 30,000 churches participated in this significant event. Amazingly, despite this growth, there are many churches that have never thought of showing appreciation to their pastors.

To guard your pastor from becoming either a hireling or a king, here are some ways to faithfully pray for your pastor:

Your Pastor's Personal Prayer Life

- Pray for your pastor's deepening relationship with the Lord, through his/her quiet time.
- Pray for your pastor to have uninterrupted time with the Lord each day.
- Pray for your pastor's personal intercessory ministry.
- Pray that your pastor will desire not only to have set times of prayer, but also a moment by moment walk with the Lord throughout the day.
- Pray that your pastor will have time and a desire to pray with his/her spouse and children each day.
- Pray that your pastor will desire to meet together with and encourage other pastors in your area.
- Pray for your pastor to have a Kingdom view of how your church fits into the larger view of reaching the city.

Your Pastor's Relational Life

- Pray for your pastor's relationship with spouse, children, parents, and other family members.
- Pray for your pastor's relationship with other pastors, that there will not be a spirit of jealousy or competition between them.
- Pray for your pastor's relationship with the elders and members of the congregation. Pray for truth, honor, and respect.
- Pray for your pastor's relationship in your city or area—that he/she will seek to help promote unity in the Church. This is something that the Lord Jesus prayed for (John 17), so pray that your pastor will be encouraged to join with other churches who name Jesus Christ as Lord.
- Pray for your pastor's relationship with "parachurch" or other organizations in the area—that there can be a healthy partnership for the cause of the gospel.
- Pray for your pastor's relationship with congregation members as he/she counsels or disciples them with wisdom and appropriate boundaries.

Your Pastor's Prayer Covering

- Pray that two or three close (same sex) friends of the pastor will be open to being personal intercessors for your pastor. They need to be people that your pastor chooses and feels the freedom to share personal burdens and confidential requests.
- Pray for a larger group of intercessors who will pray for specific prayer requests offered by the pastor on a regular basis.
- Pray that your entire congregation will pray for your pastor with specific requests that are updated periodically. Pray that they will also support and encourage him/her in a variety of ways.
- Pray that intercessors familiar with spiritual warfare will withstand the enemy forces that are seeking to hinder the blessing the Lord desires to pour out on your church, your pastor, and his/her family.
- During this month of clergy appreciation, invite the Lord to put your pastor on your heart frequently for prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you insights about how to pray effectively. May your pastor be truly the shepherd that the Lord has called him/her to be in your church and community.