

When Your Pastor Thinks He's Brother Molehill

Jim Elliff

It might surprise you to know that many pastors who have generous smiles on their faces each Sunday are, deep down, very disheartened.



Pastoring a church is difficult work. For one thing, it is usually thankless. I know there are some churches that seem to remember their pastors with much fanfare, but most churches do not ever esteem them. They don't work for just the members ultimately, so they can get over it, but never hearing those words, "Thanks for what you do, pastor," is discouraging. But you can remedy this one, can't you? Perhaps right now is the best time to write that email or note, or to make a phone call.

Some pastors get discouraged because they know their people expect a Dr. Internationally Known Mountain, when who they really are stuck with is only Brother Molehill. Expectations are at an all-time high in these days of exceptional media coverage. Every pastor is happy when a member listens to sermons every day, but he knows he doesn't measure up to the gifted pastors these people hear most of the time.

Some are discouraged because they are physically worn out. It just takes a few sensitive members to help him remedy this problem by pulling him away from normal tasks for a break. A member who makes special efforts to show love to his or her pastors will never be forgotten. I used to have a man who took me to lunch each week just to talk. He would usually say something to encourage me and even slip me a \$20 bill. He helped me immensely to keep perspective. Perhaps you can pull your pastor away for that fishing trip or golf outing. Such things are like a drink of cool water on a dry, dusty day. Paul said of Philemon, "You've often refreshed me." Be like that.

Some are discouraged because they cannot resolve long-standing conflicts in the church. Churches have conflicts because they have people. Even the early churches had them. But pastors take these very hard, and long for conflict resolution.

There may be other reasons pastors are discouraged. They aren't perfect and can even bring more on themselves than is dealt to them by the church's health.

What can you do? Perhaps more than anything else, just become your pastor's friend. Friendship has a healing aspect to it. Open your home and care for him. Think of the pastor's wife and kids. They need you also. I doubt that you could possibly know what intentional love can do for those God has, in his providence, put over you in the Lord. Do what friends do—take them extra vegetables from the garden, invite them along for your trip to the Mexican restaurant in town, buy that scarf that you think the pastor's wife will like. You're not buying friendship, but nourishing it.

"Let them do this [the management of the church] with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable to you," the writer of Hebrews said. But I know you church members pretty well. When you get to thinking about it, you can do some amazing things for the pastors God has given you. Get started right now.

"Esteem them highly in love."