
Appreciate Your Pastors



Pastor Amresh Semurath

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Your

Pastors

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Appreciate Your Pastors

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The Reformed Evangelical Church

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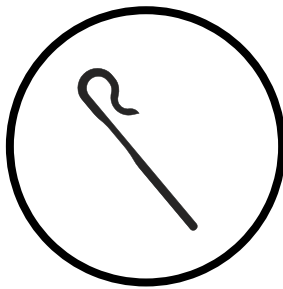
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Dedicated to my fellow Pastors and to those faithful men I have known over the years and served with in this glorious ministry the Lord has called us to.

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Pastors Have The Charge Over You

But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.

Hebrews 13:7

The apostle Paul and the writer to the Hebrews are speaking about pastors in the two verses above. Paul said three things about pastors. He said, and I am beginning with the second point, they “have the charge over you in the Lord.” “Have the charge” is literally to stand before you. The Greek verb refers to those who lead or preside over. In other words, your pastors are your leaders (cf. Heb.13:17). They have spiritual authority over you. They lead you, protect you, and care for you. Peter described this as “shepherd[ing] the flock of God among you, exercising oversight.” (1 Pet. 5:2; cf. Acts 20:28).

Leadership in the church is a spiritual gift (Rom. 12:8). Pastors

are gifted (equipped) by Christ and then are given as Christ's gifts to a church that He is building (cf. Eph. 4:11). Note the word "those". The Thessalonian church had a plurality of pastors. So did the Ephesian and Philippian churches (Acts 20:17; Phil. 1:1). Plurality is God's will for very good reasons. Very importantly, plurality prevents the formation of pastoral dynasties in the church.

This brings us to the expression "in the Lord". "In the Lord" sets before us the sphere of a pastor's leadership over the church in which Christ has put him. The church is Christ's church and the pastor leads the church under the Lordship of Christ. The pastors' authority can be exercised only in so far as the Lord has given them authority to act. Pastors are not autonomous sovereigns but represent Jesus' authority. They are commissioned by Christ to carry out their oversight of the church according to His will and not according their own will. Christ's will is clearly revealed in the word of God, the Bible. Pastors do not need any extra-biblical revelations to know Christ's will for His church. There is a day coming when every pastor will have to answer to Christ for his leadership of the church and the authority he exercised over the church. Heb. 13:17, "leaders ... as those who will give an account."



Diligent Laboring

he who leads, with diligence

Romans 12:8

Paul's second description of the pastor is that they "have charge over you in the Lord." Now, I turn your attention to Paul's first description, "those who diligently labor among you." Pastoral work is just that; it is work. But I want you to note the Greek words used to describe pastoral work. "Labor diligently" is the translation of one Greek verb and it means to work with effort and unto weariness. The word refers to both bodily and mental labor. Luke 5:5 gives us one example of the use of this verb. Peter, the fisherman, said to Jesus, "Master, we *worked hard* all night and caught nothing." Paul used this verb several times to describe his labors in the ministry.

Another word that is used to describe the pastor is "workman" (2 Tim. 2:15; cf. Matt. 9:38). This word was typically used to describe laborers who worked in the fields. The simple point is that God has described the work of faithful pastors as difficult, strenuous, and wearisome work. For God's description of the work ethic of unfaithful pastors, refer to Ezekiel 34.

Now, let us consider the following verses.

“he who leads, with diligence.” (Romans 12:8)

“Diligence” also means, with zeal, with earnestness, with every effort to do one’s best.

“We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.” (Colossians 1:28-29)

Note, firstly, the verbs Paul used to describe his work : proclaim; admonish (counsel; warn), teach. Note, secondly, the verbs “labor & strive.” “Labor” is the same verb “diligently labor.” “Strive” is the Greek verb **agonizomai**. Note the first part of the verb, “**agon**”, which is related to “agony”. The verb also means to struggle, to fight in the face of strong opposition (cf. 1 Thess. 2:2; Col. 2:2; cf. Jude 1:3 “contend earnestly”). **Agonia** was used to describe Jesus praying in Gethsemane (Luke 22:44). Preaching is **agonizomai**, very serious spiritual warfare.

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15)

The word “diligent” is the same as in Rom. 12:8 above but now a verb. The pastor is a “workman” who is commanded to work with persistent diligence to handle (interpret) the word of God accurately. There are two important reasons for this :

- 1) The pastor’s final judgment testing and approval before God is intimately tied to his handling of the word of God.
- 2) When the pastor preaches / teaches God’s word, he is dealing with matters that have unchanging eternal consequences.

And so, his accurate interpretation of God’s word is vitally important for his listeners. In a word, the interpretation of God’s word is hard work that comes with serious final judgment consequences for both pastor and listener. Preparing to preach takes long hours of hard work. The pastor does not preach by revelation. The pastor prepares to preach from the revealed word of God and through the aid of the Holy Spirit’s illumination.

“The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.”

(1 Timothy 5:17)

“Work hard” is our verb “diligently labor”. Our focus here is on the last part of the verse: the pastor’s work of teaching and preaching is hard work and calls for diligent labor.

Sadly, the great bane of the ministry today is laziness and carelessness. And the eternal consequences are utterly frightening.



Give You Instruction

But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction

1 Thessalonians 5:12

This brings us to the third point Paul made about pastors and their work. He said they “give you instruction.”

“Give instruction” comes from a Greek verb, ***noutheteo***, that means to counsel, to admonish, and to correct those in error. The pastors are to be the doctrinal and ethical guardians of the church who expose false teachings and correct those whose lives do not match their profession (cf. Acts 20:28-31). The goal of the pastor’s instruction is to change the character and conduct of the person. This verb is found eight times in the New Testament and the noun is found three times. The NASB used the following translations : admonish; instruction; warning. Let us note the following.

One of the important spiritual qualifications of the pastor is “able to teach.” (1 Tim.3:2). Paul added in Titus 1:9 that pastors must “[hold] fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the

teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.” (cf. 2 Tim. 1:13). Note the word “sound” which Paul used eight times in the pastoral epistles. In context, this word describes that which is spiritually healthy and which gives spiritual health. And that which gives spiritual health is, as Jude says, “the faith once for all handed down to the saints.” (Jude 1:3).

To be able to teach the word of God, the pastor must have a growing and accurate knowledge of God’s word revealed and recorded for us by inspiration in the Bible. He must continually be a faithful and disciplined student of God’s word. And as already seen, the pastor must be able to interpret the word of God accurately because he is dealing with spiritual life and death matters that have unchanging eternal consequences (cf. 2 Pet. 3:15-18).

Beware of those who come to you with extra-Biblical visions and revelations, a supposed word from God. They are heretics teaching heresies, even worse, doctrines of demons (1 Tim. 4:1). When pastors are untrained, do not know their Bibles, are not growing in their knowledge of God’s word and do not accurately interpret God’s word, they become teachers of false doctrines.

They become ravenous and savage wolves (Matt. 7:15; Acts 20:29). They become the spiritual enemy and eternal destroyer of the souls of men and women. But the promise in 1 Cor. 3:17-18 is that those who destroy God's church, God will destroy them. "Let no man deceive himself" in this matter. In Gal. 1:8-9 Paul said with repetition that they are "accursed" (*anathema*).

The Bible clearly teaches that through his accurate interpretation and teaching, the pastor instructs believers under his charge in the word of God. At the same time he teaches the believers to accurately interpret God's word. He causes the believers to richly grow in an accurate knowledge of God's word. (Col. 3:16). He helps the believers obey 2 Pet. 3:18, "but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

In Eph.4:12-16 we note the following:

- 1) The pastor equips believers for the work of service in the church.
- 2) He helps the church to attain the unity of the faith.
- 3) He brings believers to spiritual maturity.
- 4) He guards them from false teachers, their craftiness and their false doctrines.

The deadly reality of false teachers surfaced in the apostolic church and has remained with us to this day.

Pastor, are you holding fast the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints by Christ and His apostles?



An Easy Job?

Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.

James 3:1

The average church member usually believes the work of the pastor is a cool, easy job. After all, pastors work only one day per week, Sundays. And on a given Sunday they may work about four hours maximum. If you are one of these church members, I would invite you to come spend a week with me.

On February 25th, 2014, *Forbes Magazine* made a list of the nine toughest leadership roles in the world. The CEO of a company was listed number 9. The pastor was listed number 5. The article stated , “Being a pastor is like death by a thousand paper cuts.... You’re scrutinized and criticized from top to bottom, stem to stern.”¹In other words, it is a slow, long, painful death. Faithful pastors usually work more than eight hours per day and they are on 24/7 call.

Very often while you are sleeping, your pastor may be out or on

a late-night phone call attending to some poor, sometimes cantankerous, soul. While you are sleeping, your pastor may be watching over your soul in prayer (Heb. 13:17), deeply burdened by the fact that, in your spiritual arrogance, you are going in a direction that could bring your soul to spiritual ruin. When a pastor preaches, he expends a great deal of energy emotionally, mentally, spiritually, and physically. Researchers say one hour of preaching is comparable to eight hours of hard work.

When a faithful pastor is preparing a sermon, he does not sit and wait for revelations from God. He prayerfully chooses his text and studies it carefully for long hours with the aid of the Holy Spirit and good study books. Since the Bible was written in Hebrew and Greek, he will do careful study in the original languages.

Some boast, "I do not study books. I trust the Holy Spirit and just study my Bible." This boast is spiritually and intellectually insane. Then there are those pastors who think that it is very spiritual to say, "I didn't have time to study to preach this week, but let us see what God has to say to us today." It is utterly wicked to come into the pulpit unprepared and then pretend you have a message from God for the people in the church.

As the pastor prepares to preach, he becomes burdened by the fact that his sermon can be an aroma of life or an aroma of death (2 Cor. 2:15-16). This is such an awesome responsibility and heavy burden to bear, that Paul asked the question in 2 Cor. 2:16, “Who is adequate for these things?” Who is competent and qualified to bear this burden? Only God’s grace, wisdom, and strength makes the pastor adequate. And then Paul added in vs. 17, “For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God.”

In 2 Cor. 4:2 Paul said we are “not walking in craftiness, adulterating the word of God.” The peddler is one who waters down a product for personal profit. Sadly, the Christian ministry has many peddlers who have no fear for God.

Paul wrote a frightening passage for the pastor in 2 Tim. 4:1-4. He is commanded “in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus” to faithfully preach the word of God and not be a seeker-sensitive people pleaser. It is more important to preach the gospel that is the power of God unto salvation (Rom.1:16) than to preach about climate control. God didn’t call us to be woke preachers.

When you stand in the final judgment to give an account for your pastoral labors, the primary issue would be whether you faithfully preached the word of God, the gospel of Christ. (cf. James 3:1).



Appreciate Your Pastors

But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you

1 Thessalonians 5:12

The apostle Paul said three things regarding your relationship with your pastors. But firstly, we note that Paul said, “But we request of you.” This is not a polite request but rather a strong exhortation concerning how the church should treat its leaders.² Paul’s exhortations are based upon, “because of their work.” In the previous pages we have seen the nature of the pastor’s work. God has described it as very hard, stressful work with unchanging eternal consequences.

Now firstly, Paul said, “appreciate [your pastors] who diligently labor among you.” Note the word “among”. Peter used the same word in 1 Pet. 5:2, “shepherd the flock of God among you.” Your pastors are not those men who are internet and itinerant conference preachers, regardless of how good you think they are.

Your pastors are those who are present with (among) you when you gather to worship, who preach to you and teach you, who pray for you, who counsel you, whom you call upon when you are in need or facing a crisis. It is unfair, even wrong, to compare your pastor to internet/conference preachers. Apart from all his other ministry labors, your pastor must come up with a fresh sermon(s) every week. Sunday inevitably comes around for him. Internet/conference preachers do not hesitate to preach the same sermons wherever they are invited to preach.

The verb “appreciate” conveys several meanings. The literal meaning is “to know”. Firstly, you recognize them for who they are. They are your pastors. They are Christ’s gift to your church and, by implication, to you. Secondly, you respect them as your pastors. After Sunday worship, you do not eat them for lunch. Thirdly, you honor them as your pastors because they represent Christ to you. Heb.13:7 used the verb “remember” which means to “remember them with honor”. Your pastor is your pastor not because of status or social rank, as was commonly the case in both Greek and Roman society, but because of the labor they have undertaken in the church under the call of God.

But here is the key issue, you cannot appreciate and honor your pastors unless you get to know them, know their shepherd's heart, and know the variety and nature of their labors. And the question is : how much do you know your pastors? Have you ever taken the time, and with genuine effort, to get to know your pastors? The verb "appreciate" does not mean that you appreciate your pastors on Sunday if he preaches a "good sermon" but despise him if he crushed your toes with points he made. How often have you heard it said : "who does he think he is to speak to me (us) that way?" The verb Paul used means to continually appreciate. "Remember" means "to continually remember with honor.

Why does the Holy Spirit command you to appreciate and remember your pastors? Because it is easy for Satan and disgruntled church members to move fellow members, even whole churches to despise their pastors and actively treat them with dishonor. Paul knew what it meant and felt like to be despised by those whom he loved. He wrote in 1 Cor. 4:10-13, "We are fools for Christ's sake ... we are without honor...we are both hungry and thirsty ... poorly clothed ... roughly treated ... homeless... we toil... we are reviled...we are persecuted ... we are slandered...we have become the scum of the world, the

dregs of all things.” In vs.14 Paul wrote, “I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my **beloved children.**” (emphasis mine). Faithful pastors know what it means to identify with Paul in these verses.

Now let us get a bit practical. The church’s appreciation for its pastors can be easily seen in proportion to how they pay their pastors. 1 Tim. 5:17-18 says, “The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, “YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING,” and “The laborer is worthy of his wages.”” (cf. Luke 10:7). “Double honor” refers to how much you pay your pastor. “Worthy” means to balance the scales. It is the Holy Spirit who said they are worthy of double honor. The question is this : are the scales being balanced between the pastor’s work and his salary?

The pastor represents Christ to the Church. Christ is the Chief Shepherd. The pastor is the under-shepherd “employed” by Christ and placed over His church. The Church represents Christ as the employer of the pastor. Is the church manifesting the mind and will of Christ in the care it gives to the pastor? The

infamous deacon's prayer, "Lord keep him humble; we'll keep him poor" does not represent the mind and will of Christ.

Pastors will give an account to Christ for their work as the shepherds of His church. (Heb. 13:17). But churches, as those representing Christ as employers, will also have to give an account to Christ for their dealings with pastors.

Paul wrote in Gal. 6:7, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap." Most often this verse is explained and applied in isolation as if it is some kind of proverbial saying. But what is the context of this verse? The context begins with vs. 6, "The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him." When last have you sown by sharing with your pastor some "good thing"? The "good thing" Paul is writing about is not a pat on the back, a hug, or, "Pastor, I am praying for you." Are churches reaping in the quality of pastors they have because their sowing is fleshly? (vs. 8).

Paul commanded you to appreciate your pastors because God knew that is something you will neglect to do. When was the last time you obeyed God and appreciated your pastors?

Some wait for *Pastors' Appreciation Month* (October) before they reluctantly show some appreciation to their pastors. How sad for them and what they are sowing.



Esteem Your Pastors

and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work.

1 Thessalonians 5:13

Firstly, Paul said to appreciate your pastors because they diligently labor among you. Secondly, Paul said, “that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work.

Note how other English Bibles translate this verse:

“Hold them in the highest regard in love” (*NIV*)

“Show them great respect and wholehearted love” (*NLT*)

“esteem them beyond all measure in love” (*LEB*)

“esteem them exceeding highly in love” (*ASV*)

This sampling shows you the struggle of the translators. Gary Shogren saw in this exhortation, Paul going a step up and intensifying what he is requiring of church members. He wrote , “The language of Paul’s statement should electrify the reader.”³ The Greek verb actually means “continually esteem”. It also means to think, consider, regard, to give careful and deliberate consideration to something or someone.

“Very highly” is found in three places in the New Testament:

- 1) Eph. 3:20 - “abundantly beyond”
- 2) 1 Thess. 3:10 - “most earnestly”
- 3) 1Thess. 5:13 - “very highly”

The idea in the meaning is “abundantly out of all bounds; beyond all measure.”⁴

“In love” means within the sphere of love. In other words, you must give careful thought to your pastors, see their calling, worth, work, and know them, appreciate them, and give to them the highest esteem within a sphere of love. Why? To esteem faithful pastors is to esteem the One who, out of His love for you, gave them to you.



Live In Peace With Your Pastors

Live in peace with one another.

1 Thessalonians 5:13

Finally, Paul commanded, “Live in peace with one another.” The command is not to make peace. The command is to maintain the peace that Christ, who is our peace, has given to His church. Within the context, the first application of the command is to members : live in peace with your pastors. Your pastors are not your enemies. If they were your enemies then they cannot be called shepherds. Wolves are your enemies. If your pastor is a wolf in sheep clothing, then you need to flee from him as quickly as possible and as far away as possible.

There are those who think that pastors are there to be manipulated to do their will. They have their own arm-chair unbiblical ideas about how to lead the church. And they are always ready to twist the pastor’s arm to do their will. When the pastor refuses to be manipulated, they then declare war on the pastor and boast ,”I eh afraid no pastor!!” Behind every idol you

“will find a demon. But behind every faithful pastor you will find Christ. So beware!!

The second application is for pastors to live in peace with the members Christ has placed under their charge. It is for this reason that 1 Tim. 3:3 says that pastors must not be pugnacious. 2 Tim. 2:24-26 says, “The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.”

1 Pet. 5:3 says, “nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge.” The sheep are allotted or assigned to your care. There is only one Sovereign Lord in the church, the Lord Jesus Christ. Pastors represent the Lord Jesus before the church. They must beware and be afraid of behaving as if they are the Lord Jesus over the church.



Pray For Your Pastors

Brethren, pray for us.

1 Thessalonians 5:25

Now in closing: do you appreciate your pastors? Do you esteem your pastors beyond all measure in love? Do you live in peace with your pastors? Do you pray for your pastors?

Finally, I want to say this to faithful pastors who are diligently laboring in the ministry as they serve their Lord and Master. As a fellow pastor, you have a special place in my heart. I know something of your heart, your work, and the burdens you carry. My prayer is that those the Lord allotted to your charge will truly appreciate you, esteem you in love abundantly beyond what you can ask or think, and make your work joyful in the Lord. (cf. Phil. 1:4; Heb. 13:17).

The hope is that they will not wait for a proclaimed month (October) to show you appreciation, honor, and esteem but will do so as Paul commanded. But if they do not, “be steadfast,

immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that you toil is not in vain in the Lord.” (1 Cor. 15:58).

“It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.” (Col. 3:24) and one day He will say to you, “Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Lord.” (Matt. 25:23)

BRETHREN, PRAY FOR US!

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[3] Gary Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians* (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, Zondervan Academic, 2012)

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Our Services

Sunday

Sunday School (Adult & Children)

9:00 AM

Worship

10:00 AM

Wednesday

Midweek Prayer Meeting

7:00 PM



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It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do.

1 Timothy 3:1



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