

## The Pastor's Perceived Calling

There is often a discrepancy between the role of the pastor in his/her mind and the role of the pastor in the mind of his/her congregation. It should be noted that there is probably an accurate medium to be found between these two positions. It has been my understanding that the Biblical qualifications of a pastor are delineated in 1 Timothy 3:2-7:

An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. *He must be* one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), *and* not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. And he must have a good reputation with those outside *the church*, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.<sup>i</sup>

From this passage, I have surmised that the role of the pastor must begin within his/her own home where s/he is to exercise rulership and management over the entire family. Certainly, this pattern is an appropriate characterization of the role that is to be played within the church as well. Another aspect of this is found in a phrase often quoted by a pastor-friend of mine in Alabama. He says, "You can lose your church and still keep your family; but if you ever lose your family, your stand at risk of losing your church as well."<sup>ii</sup> I think there is great wisdom in those words. Because of this sentiment, I believe that the pastor must protect his/her family as well as him/herself by establishing within him/herself limitations and guidelines that s/he will allow of the church's expectations upon him/herself and family.

The pastor must be careful to set aside time for vacation and time alone as a family. Also, there must be time set aside for personal recreation, personal rest, family togetherness, and personal mental and emotional maintenance. Some have suggested that pastors should not factor those things into the equations but I suggest that if the leader is not adequately concerned for his/her own family and well-being, s/he will not last long enough in life to be able to last long in ministry.

### **The people's perceived pastoral calling**

The congregation is going to have its own expectation of the pastor. Some of these may be from scripture but often these are derived from the particular church's history of how pastors in the past have served there. For instance, there are churches that are built primarily upon the pastor's use of visitation both within and without that congregation. In such a case, the pastor may make daily visits to all of his congregation with a goal of visiting every family once per month. S/he may also make home visits to church visitors and peripheral persons who are somehow related or known by members of the congregation.

Also, churches may have the expectation of their pastors that they are to be at every surgery including "out-patients" and stay with the family the entire time until the surgery is over and the patient is back in his/her room from recovery. It should be noted that these are very time-consuming endeavors for the pastor; yet to say that these are unreal expectations would be too simplistic. Instead, it is more proper to state that these expectations have had years of nurture and will probably take a period of time to change into more proper expectations. Also, these types of expectations can probably be addressed at the incoming pastor's initial interview. Certainly, these types of questions

should not be avoided at that time; conflicts in expectations are too critical for the spiritual and emotional health of the church and the pastor and his/her family.

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<sup>i</sup> NASB.

<sup>ii</sup> Pastor Ernie Brown, Arab, Alabama.