

Are You Paying Your Pastor What He Is Worth

By Bill Scheidler

Are you paying your pastor what he is worth? Of course the answer to that question is “NO!”

A number of years ago I read an article talking about the value of a stay-at-home mom. It was emphasizing the fact that the work that the average stay-at-home mom and mother does in relation to the home is very valuable. In fact, if you would have to hire out the work that she does there is no way anyone could afford to have one. Unfortunately, it is easy for us to take the people in our lives for granted.

Pastors and church leaders can easily fall into the same category. An old saying that I heard one time regarding the prayers of the church board toward their pastor was “Lord, you keep him humble and we’ll keep him poor.”

Sad to say that has been the philosophy of many church boards when they go to establish the pastor’s salary. Often times the question being asked is, “What does the pastor need?” They’re not asking what it a pastor worth, but what does he or she need to survive.

For this reason many pastors and leaders live on or just below the “survival level.” This only adds more stress to an already stressful life. Many pastors face a lot of pressure and barely make ends meet.

It appears that pastors of charismatic, non-denominational churches are among the lowest when it comes to salaries. In one recent study of the Barna Research Group it was determined that the average annual salary packages for the pastors of these churches was just over \$27,000 (Hardly enough to free the pastor from financial stress).

When you study the Bible relative to the salary of leaders it appears that God has a different philosophy from most church boards. God is not only concerned that pastors have enough to survive, but He wants them to have more than enough. It is interesting in the Old Testament that twelve tribes tithed to the one tribe of Levi to compensate them for their work at the tabernacle (Num. 18:24). In other words the gross salary of the Levites was actually more than the average person in one of the other tribes.

In the New Testament we can glean these principles:

- Elders are worthy of their wages (I Tim. 5:17).
- Those who are taught are to share their goods with the teacher (Gal. 6:6).
- Those who minister to the flock should be able to eat from the flock (I Cor. 9:7).
- Those who sow spiritual things should reap material things (I Cor. 9:11).
- Those who preach the gospel should live by the gospel (I Cor. 9:14).

Just what all of this means in each situation is going to be different based on many things including the size of the church, the location of the church, the budget of the church and other relevant factors. However, none of these things should be used as an excuse to deprive the pastor of his due in order to build other programs of the church.

Unfortunately most pastors will not speak up for themselves. No true pastor wants to be considered a “hireling” or someone who is just in it for the money. He would rather starve than leave the wrong impression. That is where the people of God need to arise and see to it that the pastor is blessed.

Blessed pastors bless churches. When the pastor and his family are in a position where they do not have to worry unduly about finances, the church will benefit. The pastor will be able to truly focus on building the church, praying for direction and studying the Word. When that happens the church will be blessed.

How much is a pastor worth? A lot more than you could ever pay, but give it a shot anyway.