

SPIRITUAL GIFT OF PASTOR

THE POTENTIAL TO CARE

The spiritual gift of Pastor.

October has been Pastor appreciation month.

Your acts of kindness and love and generosity have been so encouraging to us. All the cards and notes and flowers have been a blessing.

Not that our physiques needed it but the goodies and meals were delicious.

They not only hit the spot, they now help make the spot more visible.

It's a good thing it is only for one month.

But we know we are appreciated all through the year.

It has been great.

Your tangible expressions of love are so encouraging.

Who wouldn't want to be blessed with the spiritual gift of pastor?

It is timely that preaching on this gift lands near the end of this month.

I find it somewhat awkward as a pastor to preach about this gift.

Somehow it seems to be a little self-serving.

I could say that pastors are the nicest, kindest, funnest people on earth.

I could say that being a pastor is the greatest job anyone could hope for.

Rumor has it you only have to work a couple of hours a week.

If you do anything besides Sunday service it is so cushy.

You can type at the computer and listen to your favorite Christian music.

If you get thirsty or hungry just visit someone around lunch time.

Like the pastor who visited an older lady of the church.

She graciously made him comfortable in the living room.

Then she went to the kitchen to put on some coffee.

The pastor noticed a bowl of nuts on the coffee table.

He thought, 'just one won't be missed.'

But you can't stop after just one nut.

Before he knew it the bowl was over half empty.

It was obvious he had been nibbling.

When his hostess returned with coffee he apologized profusely.

Her reply was pleasant but surprising.

"That's just fine pastor, have all you like.

"I didn't know what to do with them after I sucked all the chocolate off them."

Every occupation has its hazards.

Paul tells the church in Ephesus that God's gifts include some who are pastors.

Read the entire NIV, RSV, NLB and this is the only verse that mentions pastor.

Young's Literal Translation and New Century Version omit the word completely.

Young's Literal Translation uses the word shepherds in Eph. 4:11.

New Century Version uses the phrase, "the work of caring"

It seems that much is made out of this word found in one verse.

Christianity Today estimates there are 5,520,500 full-time Christian workers employed by the Church.

A lot of people work in a position the Bible says little about.

One little boy decided he wanted to be a minister when he grew up.

He made this announcement to his parents after a Sunday service.

"I've decided to become a minister when I grow up," he said emphatically.

"That's okay with us, but what made you decide that?"

"Well," said the little boy, "I have to go to church on Sunday anyway.

"I figure it will be more fun to stand up and yell, than to sit and listen."

The Church can't get much better than that.

My apologies if you feel you are being yelled at every Sunday.

But there should be a lot more pastors in the church today than 5,520,500.

33% of the world's population is Christian.

The world population in 2013 was 7.125 billion.

That means there are 2,375,000,000 Christians.

So there is one pastor for every 430 Christians.

One pastor cannot disciple and care for that many people.

The church needs more pastors.

Our church needs more pastors.

So where do these pastors come from?

There is a biblical model.

It begins in the Old Testament.

And it is still the biblical model today.

In Deuteronomy 7:9, 11 we discover why it is still the model.

"Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love Him and keep His commandments, to a thousand generations You shall therefore be careful to do the commandment, and the statutes, and the ordinances, which I command you this day."

These words were spoken shortly after God redeemed Israel from Egypt.

That would be roughly 3,500 years ago.

God wanted to share His steadfast love with His people.

His people were those who were careful to do His will.

He promised to faithfully show that love for 1,000 generations.

At that time a generation was 40 years.

According to my math that is 40,000 years.

So what God called us to do 3,500 years ago is still his plan.

It hasn't changed.

God is calling us to careful obedience to His will.

How is that done?

He lays it all out for us in Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (READ).

God says bind His will, His law, His plan of salvation on your hand.

Have it between your eyes so you see it constantly.

Write them on the doorpost and gates of your house.

If a person does that they will at least outwardly look like a pastor.

It would be like carrying your Bible everywhere you go.

Your house would be a beacon of God's word for all to see.

Sounds pretty pastoral.

But God makes it even more personal.

He targets a very specific group of people to have this appearance.

It wasn't the Levites or the priests or the judges or someday the king.

It was parents.

God calls parents to be a pastor.

Wow! Isn't that a bit of a stretch?

No, not at all.

In God's plan of salvation, parents were the first pastors.

God calls parents to pastor their families.

God calls parents to spiritually shepherd and care for their families.

When this happens, the body of believers is strengthened.

Paul said the work of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, is to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ and to attain unity in faith so we know who Jesus is (Eph. 4:12-13).

The New Testament message is the priesthood of all believers.

The greatest gift a parent can give a child is to be their priest.

You have the awesome privilege to show them Jesus.

You can thrill to share with them God's love.

Teach your family John 3:16.

Teach them about Jesus' sacrifice, His death in their place.

The New Testament message is that all believers intercede for the lost.

You are a pastor to someone, especially those in your home.

What is required for a parent to be a pastor?

Do you have to go to Seminary?

Do you need a special license?

Do you need to be ordained?

No, there is only one expectation.

We find its clearest expression in Deuteronomy 6:5.

"And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might."

You! This is singular not plural.

God is speaking to the individual - you shall love God.

"Hear, O Israel:" (Deut. 6:4)

God wanted everyone's attention.

When God had everyone's attention He spoke to the individual.

Matt Chandler shares some thoughts on these verses.

You shall love God with everything you have.

This is a specific, profound love.

He wants us to love with all of our heart, all our soul, all our might.

We are compelled by God's amazing love for us to love Him fully.

That is your calling.

Hear O Israel, hear O Church, hear parents, love God.

And love Him without reservation.

Love God out of the love He has for you.

But there is a problem.

In Deuteronomy 4 God gives the 10 Commandments.

These are basic rules for living.

It isn't complex, it is simple.

Their simplicity can be understood by a child and cowboys.

1. Just one God.
2. Honor yer Ma & Pa.
3. No telling tales or gossipin'.
4. Git yourself to Sunday meeting.
5. Put nothin' before God.
6. No foolin' around with another fellow's gal.
7. No killin'.
8. Watch yer mouth
9. Don't take what ain't yers.
10. Don't be hankerin' for yer buddy's stuff.

But as simple as they are we have broken them all.

It is impossible to obey even the basic simple commandments.

They reveal our/my need for a Saviour.

I can't obey them nor can I fix me on my own.

Those who love God with everything recognize they have failed God.

And Jesus has made a way for you to be made right with God.

The commandments don't make you right, they lead you to repentance.

Your natural goodness, if there is such a thing, isn't measurable.

You are totally dependent on God's work through Jesus.

Because you love God you are motivated to press into Him.

You press closer to God because of God's love for you.

That stirs your affection for the Lord.

What stirs up your heart toward Jesus?

Loving God with all your heart, soul and might writes God's law on your heart.

That means you have a new heart that gives birth to a new way of living.

When God makes your heart new you are qualified to be a pastor.

And verse 7 is where we discover the work of a pastor/parent.

You love the Lord and you teach what He has written on your heart.

You teach your children diligently.

It doesn't matter what you are doing.

You might be going to hockey practice, or watching a movie.

You might be playing games or doing homework together.

You might be tucking them into bed or running through the sprinkler.

Use every opportunity to apply them to the relationships that you have.

You plaster an atmosphere of grace and forgiveness all over the house.

You do that because it is your identity; it is who you are in Christ.

You walk with others in love and forgiveness and care.

We teach our children with our lives (v.7).

Most parents I know want their kids to be good and not bad.

They often turn to the church to help their kids be good.

It's OK to look to the church for help.

But that must never diminish the parent's God-given responsibility.

The catalyst of this transformation to goodness is not the church.

The parent whose centre piece is Jesus is the catalyst to faith.

That qualifies you, as a parent, to be their pastor.

And then you might just become a pastor to your neighbours and co-workers.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and strength.

And you will be the labourers in His harvest field.

Can you think of a more beautiful, godly, picture of the Church?

Listen to this letter from a pastor-dad.

Make every day, hour, moment count.

Be who God has called you to be pastor dad, pastor mom.

Henry Drummond "No man can do more with his life than the will of God - that though we may never be famous or powerful, or called to heroic suffering or acts of self-denial which will vibrate through history: that though we are neither intended to be apostles nor missionaries nor martyrs, but to be common people living in common houses, spending the day in common offices or common kitchens, yet doing the will of God there, we shall do as much as apostle or missionary or martyr - seeing that they can do no more than do God's will where they are, even as we can do as much where we are - and answer the end of our life as truly, faithfully, and triumphantly, as they." (from *Holy Available* written by Gary Thomas)