

DMM

DEACON MAGAZINE® *Winter 2016-17*

SERVANT
LEADERS
IN THE
CHURCH

**3 Models of
Deacon Ministry**
*Traditional
Organizational
Models*

**Hospital
Visits with a
Spiritual Focus**
*A Practical Guide
for Deacons'
Wives*

**How to Serve
Widows &
Orphans**
*4 Church-
Tested Ideas*

**Benefits of
Relationship-Based
Pastoral Care**
*A New Way to
Select &
Organize*

ESSENTIALS
**The Nuts
& Bolts**
of Deacon Ministry

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ESSENTIALS
The Nuts & Bolts
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7 WAYS TO PROTECT YOUR PASTOR

Practical Ways to Provide Practical Support

by DON PUCIK

APASTOR NEAR you is “on call” every day of the week. He pours his heart into his sermon preparation, but no one seems to notice. He visits the sick, but someone is telling him he doesn’t visit enough. Someone else is asking him what he does with all of his “free time” during the week.

The church isn’t growing. He feels like he is failing in every area of his work. There’s a deep sadness rising in his soul. The joy is gone, and he thinks frequently about quitting. He is losing the hearts of his kids. He rarely gets to spend time with his wife.

Too many pastors are living this story every week. Your pastor is in danger. Here are seven ways you can help protect him.

1 Cover your pastor with prayer. When teaching on spiritual warfare, Paul urged the believers to bathe all they did in prayer and to intercede “for all the saints” (Eph. 6:18). Everyone needs someone praying for them, and your pastor is no exception. He is a primary target of the enemy who wants to exploit every weakness and magnify every failure.

Include him in your prayers at home and as the Lord brings him to mind during your day. Call or text him, letting him know when you have lifted him up. Your pastor prays with others almost daily, but how many people stop to place a hand on his shoulder and pray for him? Drop by or schedule a brief visit during the week for the sole purpose of praying for him directly.

2 Share with your pastor how God is using him. In addition to the time-consuming activities of visiting, counseling, and planning, your pastor spends countless hours preparing to preach and teach God’s Word each week. As members leave the building on Sunday, it’s easy for him to wonder, *Is God using me?* Pastors need encouragement.

While it’s true that happy people don’t complain, they should speak up! Let your pastor know how he has been used by God in your life. Text him at the end of a long Sunday and tell him what you saw God doing through him. Discuss his messages with him, taking time to share what God is teaching you through his preaching. Your specific and personal words of encouragement will be deeply felt and long remembered by your pastor.

3 Attempt to meet needs and solve problems before you report them. What do you do when a member comes to you with a ministry need? It would be a mistake to think that you are “helping” your pastor by simply telling him what you have heard. He probably has plenty on his plate already!

Since pastors are called to equip God’s people to do ministry (Eph. 4:11-12), deacons should be the first to model a mature believer’s response to the needs and problems that surface in the church. Relying on the Holy Spirit and

By routinely correcting misunderstandings, answering questions, and quelling rumors, you can lead members to a deeper willingness to trust the heart of their pastor.

drawing on God's Word, explore how God might use you to take the first steps toward a ministry solution.

4 Minimize murmuring to the maximum. Years ago the deacons in our church embraced the task of "minimizing murmuring to the maximum." The slogan expressed their desire to meet needs and handle complaints in a way that helped the church remain spiritually vibrant and relationally strong.

By routinely correcting misunderstandings, answering questions, and quelling rumors, you can lead members to a deeper willingness to trust the heart of their pastor. When a member remains dissatisfied, offer to accompany him to a meeting with your pastor. Your presence can have a positive and calming effect on the conversation.

5 Stand with him when he encounters destructive criticism. When the widows complained to the apostles in Acts 6 that they were not being treated fairly in the church's relief ministry, they were not attacking the leadership, they were voicing an unmet need. Understood in this way, complaints can become pathways to the creation of new ministries in the church. Similarly, criticism can be constructive, leading to positive changes and needed improvements. Deacons do not need to fear conflict, but because it is inevitable among sinful human beings, deacons should "go to school" on the biblical process of peacemaking. (See the recommended resources at the end of this article.)

Not all conflicts are the same. Your pastor is not perfect, he makes mistakes, and he is growing in Christ — just like everyone else in the church. Consequently, if someone wants to find fault in a pastor, he will always be successful! When an individual's complaints and criticisms turn into personal attacks and hostile accusations, you need to stand with your pastor, providing visible and verbal support. Church bullies cannot be ignored. If you refuse to engage and confront the inappropriate and sinful behavior of an antagonist, the conflict can quickly escalate with catastrophic damage to your pastor, his family, and the church.

6 Help him recharge and avoid burnout. When a pastor becomes chronically tired, discouraged, or overwhelmed by the incessant demands of ministry, he can suffer from burnout, losing his motivation and becoming susceptible to intense levels of temptation. Members are usually unaware of the stresses associated with pastoral ministry until it's too late.

Deacons need to help a pastor protect his use of time and avoid the abuse of his body. How? Don't expect him to attend every church function. Ask him whether or not he's taking a day off each week. Take an interest in his family, watching for opportunities to affirm and support his efforts to be a good father and husband. Be sure that he schedules and uses his vacation time. Lead the church to bless the pastor and his wife with an evening out (providing a gift card and free baby-sitting) or a weekend getaway.

7 Do ministry together. What is your ministry as a deacon? What is it that God has called the deacons of your church to actually do? In too many churches, the "ministry" of the average deacon has been reduced to sitting through a monthly meeting. God has called you to much more. Like the seven who stepped up to meet the needs of the widows in Acts 6, pray about taking on an area of ministry that would alleviate personal demands on the pastor, while addressing a needed area of ministry in your church.

As an individual deacon, one of the most encouraging things you can do for your pastor is to go with him as he does pastoral visitation, travels to a speaking engagement, or attends a denominational meeting. Together you will have a greater ministry impact on the people you see. Your presence will go a long way toward alleviating boredom, fatigue, and loneliness. Your relationship with one another will deepen, becoming more authentic and genuine.

Great pastors of healthy, growing churches never get "there" by themselves. God always uses a team of men to support, encourage, and protect that pastor. Are you part of a team like that? Are you one of those men? ☺

For Further Reading

The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict by Ken Sande (Baker Books, 2004)

Equipping Deacons to Confront Conflict by James E. White and Robert Sheffield (Convention Press, 1987)

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