

The Pastor/ Church Member Dynamic  
Hebrews 13: 7, 17 – 19  
May 2, 2010

The relationship of pastor and church member is unique; in a Baptist church, such as this one, the congregation elects – hires via a “call” – its pastor and essentially enters into a legal contract to employ him as pastor. He then is given the mandate to lead the church, which effectively designates him as the boss.

Now, I am aware that some Baptists flinch at the term “boss.” Somehow it doesn’t sound very spiritual. Yet that is the design of the church, and God’s Word bears this out. But I remind you that all of us, unless our last name is Hilton or Trump, function either as a boss or work with/ for a boss in many areas of our lives.

At work, we can’t all be bosses; neither can we all be employees. Of course, unless you are the president of the company you work for, even the bosses have their bosses! Someone has to follow the directives of their boss.

At home, we can’t all be in charge. There have to be parents who are in charge of the household, set the pace for schedules, establish rules and so forth. And the members of the household, and I speak primarily of children, must follow the rules and leadership set by the parents – bosses.

Even in our play, some are bosses and others are followers; every competitive team I belonged to had a coach. Part of my development into adulthood was due to the discipline and training given me by coaches.

At church, we can’t all be bosses. There must be a minister or ministerial team who leads the church; and just as essential are the church members who work with its ministers. Both parties are essential to the life and health of the church. Where would ministers without followers be? I not sure exactly where they might be physically, but I do know they would be very, very lonely.

By the same token, where would a church full of members be without ministers? Well, let’s just say it would be challenging, if not dangerous to itself and others. Whether at work, at home, at play or at church, whatever your position – boss or employee; parent or child; coach or player; pastor or team member – we all have responsibilities toward one another.

One of the ironies of modern life is that we all know by heart all the rights we have in this country, but all of us need to be reminded from time to time of our responsibilities. Today, I would like to look with you at the responsibilities we have to each other as pastors and church members.

Please stand to honor God’s Word as I read for us all the Scripture for today, Hebrews Chapter Thirteen, Verse Seven, then Verses Seventeen through Nineteen. (Read)

There are three main areas of responsibility I see in these verses. I will speak to the pastor's responsibility first, then the church member's responsibility second.

**I. A. The pastor has the responsibility to live his life before you in such a manner he is a Godly role model (Hebrews 13: 7a; 1 Timothy 4: 13 – 16).**

1. Any person who desires to be a pastor must understand that if you don't want to live in a glass house – meaning anyone can see into it – you probably ought to rethink the your career choice.

2. The problem, as I have sadly learned many times over my life as a pastor, is that the people see when you fail, or miss the standard for ministerial conduct and behavior, and yes, when you sin. They see you on your good days and they see you on your bad days.

3. I am reminded of the Apostle Paul's words in **Philippians 3: 12** – *“Not that I have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.”*

4. I am equally thankful for the reset button God gives us when He gives us the formula for how to seek forgiveness and restoration in Matthew 18: 15 – 17.

**B. The church member has a responsibility to see that type of Godly life and to follow it (Hebrews 13: 7b).**

1. I can easily understand why a member will sometimes pick up a stone and throw it at my glass house. They can see my faults and shortcomings, and it is proper to expect better of me.

2. But the Scripture tells you to look beyond the times I miss the mark and too look at the times I do the right thing, when I do the godly thing, and to try to imitate that in your life.

3. Remember, Paul has just concluded the famous list of great heroes of the faith in Chapter Eleven, all wonderful excellent examples of faithful living. The only impediment to that is that they are all dead! Paul obviously believed we need living role models – ones we see day by day, and can imitate them in our lives.

4. The pastor can be that role model, but certainly not the only one in your life. But it is essential for each of us to have a godly role model in our life.

5. I'll even go a step further: If you have no godly spiritual leaders in you life to imitate, I can say you are outside the will of God for you.

**II. A. The pastor is accountable before God for the decisions he makes concerning this church (Hebrews 13: 17).**

1. Yes, the pastor makes himself accountable to the deacons, or to the church council, or the entire church body at times; but his ultimate accountability is to God. God is tougher than even the deacons, and more demanding than any group in the church!

2. Think being accountable to God is fun? You would be wrong. I labor with the constant awareness that God is waiting at the end of the day to hear my account of my day's activities; that can be at the same time comforting and frightening!

3. And I understand that I will have to give an accounting before the Judgement throne of God one day for when I should have said something and I didn't say it; I will give an account for what I did when I should not have done it.

**B. The church member is responsible to follow the pastor's leadership in moving the church the way he feels God is leading him.**

1. The use of the word "obey" is a strong instruction. It has serious implications; there is no advantage to refusing to follow leadership. You have just turned something that could be a positive in your life into something negative.

2. 1 Thessalonians 4: 8 – *"Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man, but God, who gives you His Holy Spirit."*

3. Please understand, I'm not talking about blindly following the pastor. You must weigh his direction in light of the Scripture. Each of us is to beware of false teachers.

3. This is why one of the most important decisions in our life is deciding what church to identify with. If you cannot follow the pastor, then this may not be the church for you. And on the flip side of that coin, if there is a large group of people who will not follow the pastor's leadership in a church, then that is not where the pastor should be.

4. The bottom line is this: if you follow the pastor you will be blessed, not because you are following the pastor, but because you are following God's Word, and that is from where the blessing is coming (James 1: 22 – 25).

**III. A. The pastor must keep a clear conscience toward his church and its members (Hebrews 13: 17b).**

1. It is a difficult job as a pastor to keep a clear conscience toward the church and its members. I strive to the best of my abilities to love the Christians of this church as God loves them, but I confess I am not God, and I don't have His character.

2. Ministers are falling daily as their conscience moves from clear to seared. Over time they simply get beaten down.

3. Let me read what a former minister named Scott Williamson wrote when he left the ministry:

"We are tired of pretending we cannot be hurt. People assume ministers are available 24/7. People say things to clergy they would not say to their worst enemies. For some reason they feel at liberty to delve into every aspect of clergy life... Pastors live their life in the limelight, they, therefore, constantly disappoint people..."

4. Being a minister is different from every other job in the world. We have an enemy who would love nothing more than to see us fail. Losing sight of the goal, taking one's eyes off the Lord, or forgetting who is the real enemy, can cause us to lose faith.

5. Paul tells Timothy in **1 Timothy 2: 1 – 3**, "You are going to endure hardships."

**B. Church members have a responsibility to pray for their pastors.** Let me give you six things to pray for regarding your pastors:

1. Protection
2. Attitude
3. Strength
4. Tactfulness
5. Obedience
6. Refreshment