

One of the greatest leaders in the Old Testament was King David. He was a godly man who sought divine wisdom to shepherd God's flock. There is a story in 1 Samuel 22 that teaches some principles of spiritual leadership that I believe are critical to understanding your pastor. Let me share with you four things you should know about your pastor from an unlikely text.

*David therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave Adullam: and when his brethren and all his father's house heard it, they went down thither to him. And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men. And David went thence to Mizpeh of Moab: and he said unto the king of Moab, Let my father and my mother, I pray thee, come forth, and be with you, till I know what God will do for me. And he brought them before the king of Moab: and they dwelt with him all the while that David was in the hold. (1 Samuel 22:1-4)*

There is the passage. Did you see the principles? Take a closer look. You will find the first thing you should know about your pastor in the context of this verse. The previous chapter describes how David escaped from the envious King Saul and we now find him hiding for his life in a secret cave. Thus we discover that David, like **your pastor, is a hunted man.**

Just as a possessed Saul relentlessly pursued righteous David because of the threat he posed to his kingdom, Satan desires to kill, steal, and destroy the man of God who occupies your pulpit. Saul understood that as long as the son of Jesse was alive, his kingdom could not be established (1 Samuel 20:31). His goal was not running David out of town. The enemy of God is ruthless, and his aim is not to hurt the pastor's feelings or discourage him. He wants him destroyed. The cunning wolf knows that if he removes the watchful and protective shepherd, then the innocent flock can be easily devoured (Ezekiel 35:5). Your pastor is marked for death.

The second thing you should understand about your pastor deals with the nature of his calling. **Your pastor is a chosen man.** David did not live in a cold, dark and damp cave because he had no where else to go. He was not running from Saul because he could not find anything else to do. Since his childhood visit from an elderly prophet who poured oil on his head, David knew that God had a distinct purpose for his life. That anointing affected every decision David made.

It is essential to make this distinction. Your pastor (like David) did not choose the kingdom. The King chose him. Neither the people through popular vote nor delegates from every tribe elected David to his position of leadership. God rejected Saul and chose a man after His own heart. Jesus told the apostles, "You did not choose me. I chose you."

In the same manner, your pastor does not pastor simply because "he can't do anything else." David was a man of great ability. He was a skilled musician and gifted writer whose songs have outlived him and affected the lives of nearly one hundred generations. He was a brave warrior and military strategist. He was an innovative architect and a wise builder. There were many things David had the ability to do, but he did that for which he was anointed.

Most pastors have an education, skills, abilities, gifts and personality that are highly valuable. Those who think their pastor is overpaid should probably consider that his gifts could bring him a much higher salary in secular employment. If not for the intense sense of calling on his life, your pastor would certainly do something else.

The third principle you should realize is: **your pastor is a *burdened* man**. Everyone who was distressed, indebted or discontented came to David and he became their captain. Every week many hurting people find relief in sharing their heavy load with your pastor.

By caring for burdened people, David was carrying their burdens. Your burdens are your pastor's burdens. When returning to a burned Ziklag and discovering their wives and children had been captured by Amalekite invaders, valiant warriors wept until strength and tears were exhausted. David wept with those who wept, finding encouragement only in the Lord. Is it possible to describe the heart of the faithful pastor who knows what it is to dedicate a baby, present him a Bible for high school graduation, marry him to a beautiful bride and then comfort that bride at his casket? Ministry is personal.

Keep in mind that David was not exactly problem-free. He had more than his fair share of intense difficulty and on top of his own burdens he bore the weight of many others. At Ziklag, David's family had been captured too. Your pastor knows the struggle of balancing work and family. He makes car payments and pays income taxes (instead of receiving refunds). On top of everything else he endures physically, emotionally and spiritually, there is the daily care of the church.

One of the most common complaints members share about their pastor concerns how much time he has off. Every one needs time away from the daily grind and routine to keep a healthy peace of mind, refresh the spirit and renew the body. The pastor's day off should be respected not rejected. Your pastor sometimes needs a vacation just from the burdens he has carried on your behalf! The longer a man pastors the same congregation, the more time away may be needed.

Lastly, you should realize that **your pastor is a *sacrificing* man**. The benefit of great leadership is not without great cost. Your pastor has forfeited many privileges you take for granted. David was a homeless exile fleeing from raging Saul. Keeping a wife happy and children fed in desert caves must be a difficult task. Simple desires like drinking water from the well by the gate of his childhood home meant more to David than could be described by words.

Your pastor's family has also made some accommodations because of his calling. Notice that David's father and mother had to leave their home in Bethlehem because of the uncertainty of David's future. Samuel did not anoint Jesse. He had no particular calling. He threatened no one, and yet, he made a costly sacrifice because of the calling on his son's life. In the same manner, the families of many pastors are forever changed because of God's calling. Many pastors' children deal with issues the parishioner's children have never imagined. Many wives carry a constant insecurity about the future.

Your pastor is in this for the long haul! This level of service requires not a token contribution but a total commitment. The Apostle Paul said that he was pouring out his very life's blood like a drink offering to complete the faithful sacrifice of the believers in Philippi. His only prayer was that it would not be in vain (Philippians 2:17).

How rewarding to see the fruit of labor! The good pastor realizes he is not merely spending and being spent for the church. He is investing and looking for a return. This brings personal satisfaction and contentment. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

David was not just another shepherd from Judah. He was more than a man with big plans. David was a man with an anointed calling upon his life who was extremely committed to the task assigned him by God. Your pastor is not just another preacher. His job is more than an occupation. He hears God's voice, shepherds many hurting people, faces a treacherous enemy and refuses to surrender. So then, how should we respond?

**1. Esteem the man of God highly in your thoughts and in your speech.** When David returned to Jerusalem after being temporarily deposed by his son Absalom, he encountered Mephibosheth by the way. Jonathan's son had neither trimmed his beard nor changed his clothes grieving for David. He regarded the King as an Angel of God.

**2. Recognize your pastor's contribution in your life.** We can ill afford to forget from whence we came. Those in debt and distress found help and stability in David. Mephibosheth reminded David that his family members were but "dead men before my lord the king: yet thou didst set thy servant among them that did eat at thine own table." Do not forget the many times you have been fed by the man you call pastor!

**3. Be one of his mighty men.** David was surrounded by four hundred cunning warriors, but some thirty of them excelled them all. Of those thirty mighty men, there were a few groups who were extra special. When hearing David long for the simpler days wishing for water from Bethlehem's well, one such group risked their very lives to grant him that request. Overwhelmed with their gratitude David refused to drink. He did not need water. He needed someone to show him how much they loved him.

Are you willing to go out of your way to show your pastor in a practical way that you appreciate what he has done for you?