

There Are Things a Pastor Cannot Do

I became a pastor, because for quite some time I sensed a clear call from God to preach the gospel, teach scripture, lead and love God's people.

I knew pastoring would be difficult at the best of times, but it is a privilege and burden I am willing to bear, if Christ is with me.

The toughest part of pastoring (for me) is watching people choose things other than God and his best for them, and subsequently miss out on the abundant life "hidden with Christ in God". Like most pastors, I am a "fixer". I want to solve problems for people. But God has not called me to fix people or solve their problems; he has called me to love and shepherd them.

The truth is, there are things a pastor can and cannot do. The sooner we embrace this, the sooner we can live fully into the call of God in our lives.

I have recently come to terms with the following truths about pastoring a church.

- 1. A pastor cannot save people from their sin.** Only Jesus can do that. No matter how much I desire to see people cast aside the things that hinder them in their pursuit of God, I cannot take their burden of sin away. I must trust that work to Jesus.

2. A pastor cannot force people to mature in Christ. Only the Holy Spirit can do that. No matter how frustrated or heartbroken I am by Christians, who show no interest in growing in their faith or evidence of Christian maturity, I cannot make anyone mature. I must trust that work to the Holy Spirit.

3. A pastor cannot make people brokenhearted for the lost. Only the Father can do that. No matter how much I try to point out the plight of those living apart from Christ, or try to inspire compassion for the broken, I cannot break people's hearts for them. I must trust that work to the Father, who himself seeks and saves the lost and broken.

4. A pastor cannot give a church a missional (outward) focus. Only God can do that. No matter how desperately I plead with people to put their faith into action outside the walls of our church, I cannot make them go where God is calling us. I must trust that work to God, who sends the workers out into the fields, which are ripe for a harvest.

5. A pastor cannot change people. And God won't change people, unless they are willing.

When I try to do these things, I unwittingly set myself up for failure and frustration, because I am reaching out to grasp things, which are not mine to begin with. They belong to God, and God alone. I can desire these things for the people under my care, but the work belongs to the Lord.

So, what can a pastor, who hopes to see these things in the

life of the church, actually do?

1. **A pastor can pursue** his or her own spiritual growth and vitality, surrendering self to Christ.
2. **A pastor can urge** people toward faithfulness through preaching, teaching, and spiritual direction.
3. **A pastor can set an example** by loving the lost and the broken and inviting them into relationship with Jesus.
4. **A pastor can cast** a missional vision and invite others to join together in Kingdom work.
5. **A pastor can pray for people.**

The only thing a pastor can really do is surrender his or her life to Jesus. The rest is up to God.