

10 Traits of Pastors Who Have Healthy Long-term Tenure

Imagine what might take place if pastors consistently stayed at churches for 10 or more years. Imagine that their tenure was largely healthy. Imagine what would happen in our congregations.

The median tenure of a pastor at a church is around four years. Simply stated, over one-half of pastors leave a church before their fourth anniversary. And our research shows that the time of greatest fruit in a pastor's ministry does not *begin* until somewhere around years five to seven.

Is it possible, then, for pastors to stay longer in a healthy situation? In many cases, the answer is a resounding "yes"!

I approached this issue by looking at over 30 pastors whose tenure exceeded 10 years. And from my perspective, their tenures have been healthy and loving. Here are the 10 traits of those pastors:

1. **They pray daily for their church members and staff.** Many of the pastors kept the church membership roll in front of them and prayed through the entire congregation and staff every year.
2. **They view their family as their first line of ministry.** They did not see a dichotomy between church and family. To the contrary, they saw their family as the first priority of ministry in the church. I will elaborate on this matter in my post this Saturday, where I will share ways Satan seeks to destroy the families of pastors.
3. **They connect with and love people in their community.** Pastors are more likely to stay at a church longer if they love the community in which they are located. That love must be deliberate and intentional.
4. **They choose their battles carefully and wisely.** Not every issue is worth a fight. Long-term pastors are not cowardly; they are just highly selective and wise.
5. **They welcome structures that make them accountable.** Certainly, they don't seek structures that hinder their leadership. But a leader who avoids accountability is headed down a path of destruction.
6. **They spend time developing staff.** These pastors view their staff, whether full-time paid, part-time or volunteer, as one of their highest priorities for development and mentorship.
7. **They expect conflict and criticism.** They are a reality in any family or congregation. But these leaders are not surprised or frustrated by conflict and criticism. They realize, if it is handled well, it can be healthy for the church.
8. **They connect with other pastors and ministries in the community.** They realize that their congregations cannot minister to and reach the community alone. Other churches and pastors thus become partners in ministry rather than competitors.
9. **They affirm both theology and practical ministry.** Their foundation is the Word of God. They have a robust theology. But they don't neglect such practical issues as attendance trends, outreach ministries, financial health and parking lot capacity.
10. **They ask long-term questions.** They are constantly seeking to lead the church beyond their own tenure. They avoid short-term solutions with long-term negative consequences.