



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS

Are you aware that October is designated as Clergy Appreciation Month? I must admit, I was not aware of it, until I heard it mentioned on a syndicated radio show a few weeks ago. As I searched for a little more information, I discovered that for several years, several Christian ministries, publishers, and agencies have combined their energies to encourage those of us who “sit in the pews” to find appropriate ways to honor and support those who serve God and serve us as pastors and ministers. It is a great idea, and a great opportunity for us to declare, **WE LOVE OUR PASTORS!**

I must admit, however, that my discovery of this new “holiday season” evoked some mixed feelings. At first, it made me a little MAD. I thought to myself, “Well, I am ‘clergy’ and I don’t know that I’ve ever felt particularly appreciated in October.” Then, it made me a little SAD. I thought to myself, “I wonder how long it has been since my pastor felt ‘particularly appreciated’ at any time of the year?” Finally, it occurred to me that Scripture teaches we are to be GLAD for every opportunity to display our respect and regard for those who serve God as ministers of the gospel and shepherds of the flock. Paul said to the church at Thessalonica, “Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other.” (I Thessalonians 5:12—13)

Paul reminds us that we are to “respect” and “highly regard” those whom God has called to ministry and placed in spiritual authority within the church. He reminds us to love them “because of their work.” As humans, we tend to place conditions or limits on our love for anything or any person. When it comes to loving our pastors, we often say, “I’ll love my pastor WHEN...his sermons get shorter; or, WHEN... his preaching gets better; or WHEN... he becomes more outgoing and personable; or WHEN... he starts acting like our previous pastor; or maybe, WHEN... he stops acting like our previous pastor. We might also say, “I’ll love my pastor IF...he won’t preach so much about money and giving; or AS LONG AS his theology is in agreement with my theology; or AS LONG AS...he never changes anything about our church; or maybe, IF he changes everything I don’t like about our church.”

IF, WHEN, and AS LONG AS comes pretty naturally to us because we are human. But, God calls us to a higher level of expression of our respect, regard, and love for our pastors. “Hold them in the highest regard in love BECAUSE of their work.”

- * “I love my pastor BECAUSE...God has called him and placed him in a position of leadership and authority.”
- * “I love my pastor BECAUSE...he approaches God in humility and surrender, but leads God’s church with courage and strength.”
- * “I love my pastor and his family BECAUSE...they so gracefully respond to the incredible pressure of the “pastor’s life;”
- * I love my pastor BECAUSE...hmmmmm...words escape me.

I’ve got an idea, though. Why don’t you complete the statement above? Write it on a piece of paper or a note card, drop it in an envelope, and send it to your pastor sometime during October...or November...or any other month. Anytime will be the right time for “holding them in the highest regard in love BECAUSE of their work.”

Bro. Mike