

TEN THINGS PASTORS DON'T LIKE ABOUT PASTORING

By Thom Rainer

The expectations of a pastor are endless. Many members expect them to be omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent. But different pastors are wired differently. One pastor may get great fulfillment out of counseling, while another dreads every minute of it.

So I did an informal and unscientific survey of pastors. I asked them a simple question: "What do you like least about being a pastor?" The question was open-ended and they could give more than one response.

I learned two things from this survey. First, pastors can have strong opinions about what they don't like. Second, pastors are really different. The responses were wide-ranged and often in opposition to each other.

So here are the top ten things pastors don't like about pastoring. I've listed them in reverse order. I then follow each dislike with a comment from a representative pastor.

10. Dealing with budgets and finance. "I have a pastor friend who has a finance major. He was in business before he went to seminary and he loves working with numbers. Not me. I get nauseas at the thought of working on the church budget."

9. Weddings. "Emotions are usually high at weddings. Some people are difficult to handle. Plus the rehearsal, ceremony, and reception take away my whole weekend. I wish we could pass a law that no weddings can take place during college football season."

8. Announcements in the worship service. "This past Sunday I was asked to announce that one of the older Sunday school classes was having a garage sale to raise money to repair the pipe organ. Their hearts were right, but I had to talk about a garage sale and a pipe organ right before I preached."

7. Persistent critics. "You have to deal with critics if you are a pastor. I just struggle with those who are always on me about something. They never let up. It can be demoralizing."

6. Anonymous critics. "I shouldn't even let anonymous critics bother me. If they don't have the courage to use their name, I have no reason to dwell on it. But, I've got to admit, it really bugs me. I find myself wondering throughout the day who it might be."

5. Counseling. "I really envy those pastors who are counselors. They get energized by listening to people at their points of need and hurt. I have to admit that my mind wanders and I watch the clock. I don't think I really help anybody when I counsel."

4. Treating spouses like they are paid staff members. "I really hurt for my wife because we have one church member that expects her to put in the same amount of hours at church as I do."

My wife is taking care of our three preschool children at home, but she feels guilty every time the church member talks to her.”

3. Supporters who don't support pastors publicly. “One guy was ripping into me at our last business meeting. But he didn't bother me as much as my so-called supporters who remained silent the whole time. They've told me that they are behind me, but they weren't there for me when I needed them the most.”

2. Funerals of non-Christians. “I've been a pastor for nearly thirty years, and I still struggle when I'm asked to do the funeral of someone who never professed Christ. Most of the time my funeral message is directed at the family, and how God will comfort them. It's still not easy.”

1. Business meetings. “Let me know if you come across a pastor that actually likes church business meetings. I want to find the secret to his moments of delusion.”

What do you think of this list? What would you add?