

Transcript 126

Shea Houdmann

Welcome to the Got Questions podcast. Many of you may know that October is Pastor or Clergy Appreciation Month, the month that our nation sets aside to give us opportunities to show appreciation to our pastors. And believe October 9th is actually Pastor Appreciation Day.

Shea Houdmann

I thought a good episode would be this first to discuss with two pastors how we can show appreciation? What are some maybe standard ways or maybe some out-of-the-box ways that we can show appreciation to our Pastors. 'cause I've never been in pastoral ministry, but I've been close friends with enough pastors that I know could be a very difficult job. It can be very draining ministry. There's a lot of discouragement that can be involved, so our pastors need appreciation. And there's many passages in the Bible to talk about encouraging one another, and of course that goes for us and our pastors as well.

Shea Houdmann

So joining me today is Kevin, the managing editor, have Got Questions ministries, who has been serving in various pastoral roles for the past 28 years. And also Nelson, the director of video content, at Got Questions ministries, who has 10 years of pastor experience. So pastors some welcome today. Kevin, why don't you go and start us off from what are some ways that you would feel especially appreciated as a pastor?

Kevin Stone

Well, I'll start off with being like the the main thing for I think any pastor would be what what John talks about in John in 3rd John Chapter one in verse 4. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth. And so you really want to please your pastor give him that great joy. Walk in the truth, be committed to scripture, and be following what the Lord says. And Paul also mentions in Philippians 2 and verse two, make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind in one purpose. So this is just this is good news to any pastor's heart that he would be able to see his his congregation loving each other, agreeing with each other. So lack of disension. Being of 1 purpose and of 1 mind.

Kevin Stone

I'd like to start there and just say if you really want to do what's best for your pastor, make your pastor happy. And a happy pastor is an energized pastor. Love each other and walk in the truth. That would be, that would be the starting point I think for any pastors Appreciation month and then just make that continue through the whole year.

Shea Houdmann

Nelson, how about you?

Nelson Domingues

I completely agree. They're just like John, expressed in Scripture and Kevin just now, there is no greater joy than to see those whom you pastor and look over, those who you spend a lot of time and invested in much of that time, they don't see it's done in your study. It's done counseling many people among them, that they have no idea of the time you invest in families and in counseling in emergency situations. A lot of people don't see any of those things that are happening. They may only see what happens on Sunday morning. And so it's such an encouraging thing for a pastor to see that people are listening, that they're responding, that lives are changing, that marriages are improving, the family dynamics are also improving as well. And so when when you see that, when you see people that you've worked with, that you've prayed for, that you've spoken to maybe even some, that there's been some discipline issues but they've turned around and that their lives are improving, that they're walking with the Lord and obedience, there's nothing better than that.

Nelson Domingues

There's a sense of fulfillment as a pastor. You get to see and you understand in yourself that that your role, that your work, that you're doing something that the Lord is using in a powerful way. And that is such an encouragement and that energizes you to do more. You know, happy Pastor really does make a difference. And so that that's really important for me too. So yeah, I would say the same thing. I completely agree. The greatest gift you can give your pastor is that your ears, in your hearts, listening to him, following along what he's saying as he's pointing to Jesus, pointing to scripture, and you're following God's word. And their pastor is able to see that reflected in your life and in your family.

Shea Houdmann

Absolutely. And even with me never served in pastoral ministry and the role my role at Got Questions. We can usually deal with some difficult people or difficult situations and something just hearing a testimonial from someone who will tell me how big an impact Got Questions has had on them or even like a question of the week we send out someone right? Oh this is exactly what I needed to hear. It's little pieces like that that can really recharge my spiritual batteries to reinvigorate me for knowing OK, despite the occasional difficult people or situations I have to deal with, God is moving, God is working and seeing the impact. So this is true for you too? That's equally true for me. And I'm sure most people in ministry that the most encouraging thing in ministry is to know your ministry is being fruitful. That God is using it got us impacting lives.

Shea Houdmann

But often in Pastor Appreciation Month, people are looking for more or I don't know a tangible ways and so they will. What are some things that someone could say to a pastor or even a small gift that would you think would be particularly encouraging? Obviously not all pastors are the same. Just as there's some five different love languages, different pastors are going to be encouraged differently by different things. But generalities. What do you think are ways that people in congregations and churches could encourage and lift the spirits of their pastors?

Kevin Stone

Yeah, words of encouragement. I mentioned that first for me, I guess, because that's my love language. Words of encouragement. And it's just so it's so uplifting to have a kind word, even if it's just, you know, Pastor, I'm praying for you and your family. So I know that, I know that they're praying, but then they let

me know that they're they're praying. You know, they encouraged me in that way and then they. You know, dropping a note, a written note, something, an e-mail that they send. Something like that is very encouraging. Just affirmation just, hey, I hear you. I understand what you're what that message was about. It was for me and and just keep up the good work, that kind of thing. You know, the attaboy's. Those are very encouraging to to pastors.

Kevin Stone

There were so many. There's just a ton of ways that you can encourage your pastor though during Pastor Appreciation Month or any time. You can fix something for him, show up at his house with a tool box and say hey, what around here needs to be fixed? You know this handrail that's coming off, or maybe you know his car needs some work. Take some steps to to get it worked on. You know, he may not have the time or he may not have the finances to be getting that done and that'll be a big encouragement just to.

Shea Houdmann

Or in my case, the skills, yes.

Kevin Stone

Yeah, yeah. You use those skills that God has gifted you with to, to bless your Pastor. Take some responsibility from him. You you notice that in your church your pastor is doing a lot of different things. He wears a lot of different hats. And maybe there are some some little things that he wouldn't really have to be doing. Somebody else could step up and take that responsibility from him. So maybe that someone is you. Maybe you could go to your Pastor and say, hey I I would like to handle this aspect of the ministry. I would like to take this particular busy work or this job and and I will own it. I will take responsibility for this, not just in October, but I want you to be relieved of this responsibility permanently. You know, you don't have to worry about this anymore.

Kevin Stone

We've got a couple in my church came to me a couple years ago and said, you know, I notice you're out there changing the sign every week. The church sign out front, you know, putting all the the new lettering out there. We put a Bible verse out there every month. And they said we'd like to do that for you. And I said that would be great. And they have been faithfully doing that ever since they volunteered to do it. Now they've just taken that on as their own responsibility. What a blessing that is, because that it saves me, saves me a bunch of time every month to sort out the letters and get them installed and all of that kind of stuff. And I praise the Lord for for that blessing. A lot of little things like that that can be done around the church. So just a practical idea.

Nelson Domingues

Yeah, I have to agree. There are so many different things you can do, and it really requires you to know your pastor. Be involved in his life. Does he have any hobbies that he enjoys? And maybe there's something there that you could gift him with. You know, maybe he's a big sports fan and, you know, maybe tickets to a game or something like that would be something big. Or you know something that he needs. You know if he's a sports player again, if he needs a new baseball bat or or whatever. Things like that are always fun because it shows that you know them. You know it's not just about receiving some

sort of gift or something like that. It reveals that you know their interests and you know that you've ah, vthat you want them to go out and do some recreational things. That means a lot sometimes to a pastor to know that you are investing in them to take time off. I think most pastors spend an incredible amount of time tending to their flock and in the work that they're doing, and most people don't see that and when they get a note of encouragement or a gift that allows them to take time off maybe to go to get a weekend trip or, you know, even more than that, pay for vacation or something.

Nelson Domingues

I mean, these are all kind of big things, but the small things too. Even for me, I have small children and I've I've had someone come up to me and said we'd like to babysit your children so you and your wife can spend some time together. And that was a really great gift just to have them, you know, someone that we knew and that we trusted. And they they decided to watch our kids for an evening. Now for the sole purpose of again allowing me to spend time with my wife. And that was a really nice gift to give. It was a gift of time to be together and so there are a lot of things I think like that. Not just handing them cash, which is always nice, or a gift card, which is always nice, but giving them something that they can do in their time, I think is has always been a valuable thing to me when I've received gifts like that.

Kevin Stone

Yeah, if I could just add to that what Nelson was saying there about the blessing of babysitting and also maybe sending your pastor and his wife out on a weekend away vacation, maybe maybe even a longer one. When you do that for your pastor. If I could suggest that when you set up a weekend away or a vacation like of some kind, that you do think about the babysitting. And you have that covered. You have the person who's going to be filling in for your pastor all lined up so he doesn't have to be worried about that. That you cover the travel expenses, the meal expenses, and you make sure the the entertainment is underwritten so that this gift, this wonderful gift of a vacation for your pastor and his wife does not turn into an extra expense for him. You know, I'm talking about all expenses covered when you do that kind of thing. That would be a really big blessing for your pastor and his wife that that getaway and that time together.

Shea Houdmann

When I talked to my pastor here in Colorado Springs, and one of the things he mentioned was that he would love more feedback on his sermons. And he says the vast majority of time people just walk by and will say, oh, it's a great message, but like nothing concrete. It's like nothing I really liked this point. So he would really like feedback in the sense of I really like how you said this or this particular point was especially relevant to me rather than just the that a boy, good job type of encouragement. Well, I'm sure that's even you'd rather receive that than nothing at all. But the more detailed you can be in your encouragement to your pastor when you're talking about the sermon. Even if it's just an e-mail, it's like, hey, I was really thinking about this and he covered in the sermon and that was super meaningful for me. It's things like that that when Pastor spent a good chunk of their week preparing the sermon, practicing it, and then delivering it, and then to never hear any feedback from it, that that can be discouraging in itself. Even if it was a great sermon and lots of people learned from it and began applying it to their lives. But to just hear like Kevin was saying, a word of encouragement of these specific things about the sermon were really meaningful for me. That that can be huge and Kevin, Nelson, do you is that something that you you would appreciate as well?

Nelson Domingues

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, having detailed encouragements is always really important because it is sometimes, I mean, I have to admit, like, you know, at the end of the sermon some people just, we'll just say great sermon 'cause they they feel like they have to say something, right? Maybe you're kind of pastor who waits at the door and people leave or as people come up to you, they just kind of feel a sense of obligation just to say, you know, and they could be completely generous in saying it, but, you know, hey, that's great sermon. Now that's nice to know and I appreciate that and I want to hear that and and I'm sure most of the time it's very genuine. But if they actually have a specific point that they mentioned during it, or if they mentioned even something like, I've been really struggling with this topic or that topic and you've helped me in this way. Or you're someone really encouraged me to want to talk to you. Could we schedule something?

Nelson Domingues

And all those types of things, reaffirm the work that you're doing and show appreciation to the pastor of what he's doing, the time he's investing in all the people, 'cause I assure you, as your pastor is writing his sermon, he's thinking about you, he's thinking about the congregation, he's thinking about their needs, he's thinking about the general needs of the entire congregation, but then sometimes he's thinking about a specific person and how he feels the Lord directing him to speak to that particular person. I mean, that happens once in a while. And so sometimes it's really encouraging to hear back and say, hey, the the spirit really spoke to me today and I really appreciate the words that you brought.

Kevin Stone

Yeah, any kind. Of specifics with the words of encouragement is is really meaningful. You know, I I I really liked this point that you made. I had never seen this before in Scripture, you know, be honest, but the detail really helps.

Kevin Stone

Some other ideas for honoring your pastor during Pastors Appreciation Month might be to schedule a special service and a plan on a different people giving testimonies during that time. Have the kids during children church write up some notes of encouragement to present to your pastor during that special service. Collect some photos and videos ahead of time for the past year or maybe for your pastor's whole tenure at your church, and then make a video presentation of that and show that during the special service. Or make a big deal about it. And the more organized that you are as a church for Pastors Appreciation Month, the more meaningful you can make it. It's a great thing to say, hey everybody, it's pastors Appreciation Month, do something for your pastor this month. That's wonderful and that's a blessing. But just just a little tip if you're you really get organized. Have somebody spearheading this event. Then you can make it a very meaningful time. Make it a very special time for your pastor and his family.

Kevin Stone

How about taking out a newspaper article, an ad in your local newspaper with your pastors picture, and just a bunch of messages there about how you love your pastor and that serves 2 purposes, encourages as your pastor when he opens up the newspaper and then also advertises your your church a little bit.

And maybe, maybe the newspaper route is not the way to go, but social media, flood social media with messages of cheer for your Pastor and promote your your your pastor. Lift him up that way, whether it's through Facebook or Twitter or or whatever social media you're using.

Kevin Stone

And then I can almost guarantee that your pastor has some books that he would like to read. He'd like to have him on his library, on his library shelf. But he doesn't. He hasn't. He hasn't been able to afford them. Maybe a commentary set that your pastor really would like, can't afford it. Those commentaries can be very expensive. Maybe something like that, church could go together and and purchase a gift like that for him. Or maybe just a monetary gift was mentioned. That's always encouraging. But maybe, I mean, if you do a little digging, you could find out possibly a debt that your pastor is trying to pay off. The church could just say, hey, we're going to wipe out that debt. You don't have to worry about that anymore. You can focus on other things. And what a blessing that would be. Just all kinds of different ideas for honoring your pastor. And, you know, be creative and know your pastor and go from there. So be a good thing.

Nelson Domingues

There's some interesting things that I've even received, you know, once I received a jar and it had at least 50 or more little notes of encouragement or Bible verses. And just intended like once a week to take out one and just be encouraged by it throughout the year. So it was pretty cool that someone spent a lot of time and wrote all those little notes on there throughout the year.

Kevin Stone

That'd be awesome.

Nelson Domingues

Yeah, it was really nice to have that. I found secret notes around. What I mean by that is like kind of like a hidden note somewhere like once I keep my my my sermons on my tablet and it's kind of like a book tablet. And one day I just opened my book tablet and there was a note laying inside from someone in the congregation. Word of encouragement, praying for you this morning. I hope you do a great job, or, you know, praying that you know the Lord would speak to you something. A note of encouragement, whatever it was. But it was just. It was just there. I must I must stepped away from my tablet and they just snuck it right in. And that was, you know, an encouraging thing to do.

Nelson Domingues

In the office, sometimes people might stop by during the week. And I've received a card and you know, a coffee and a muffin or something like that. I'm like, hey, I just want to get your breakfast this morning and and share a card with you. And and you know, for me, as the congregation gets different cards, I I display them in my office. It's a nice reminder to have and to see these personal notes and cards that people have written, sometimes from the Sunday school classes or or small groups or just individuals they've done that and I've always really appreciate those notes that people just took some time to think about you and to just specifically right and encouragement for you.

Nelson Domingues

Because it can be a discouraging time. It can be very hard. Being a pastor is a difficult job. I mean I've had people who say like, you know what's the big deal? You know about appreciating your pastor? We all have tough jobs, and I don't get notes of encouragement. And, you know, what do you say to that to a person and say, well, here's a person who's watching over your soul? I mean, we're reminded in Hebrews chapter 13, verse 17. Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls. As those who have to give an account, let them do this with joy and not with groaning. Or that would be of no advantage to you. There's a tremendous responsibility to know that I will give an account for each and every individual I pastor, at each and every individual in the congregation, and the work that I've done. That is a huge responsibility. And it's this tremendous amount of pressure to do that, and it's such a joyful work to do, but it is a very real responsibility to take watch over an entire congregation. I'm sure many of you notice what it's like to watch over your families and feel responsible just for your own family. A pastor oftentimes feels the responsibility and is called out by scripture that he'll give an account to the Lord for his entire congregation, multiple families that he's watching over. And that's a lot of work. And so showing appreciation, knowing that he's under that stress, under that workload on his shoulders that he's constantly thinking and praying for the entire congregation and all the families, not to mention trying to maintain his own family during all that. These are some of the reasons why we appreciate our pastors.

Shea Houdmann

Excellent. I love both the practicality of some of the things that you guys are brought up and also the why when people to understand that's powerful but maybe let's close with this. I know pastors, wives have a very important role in the ministry of the Church, both in terms of their ministry with you and to you, but also to the congregation. So both to share something briefly about how in addition to showing appreciation to pastors, what do you think most pastors wives would appreciate, would be encouraged by? Maybe something they don't hear enough of. And Nelson, why don't you start us off and then Kevin, you can go after that.

Nelson Domingues

Sometimes the notes only go to the pastors of appreciation, and when a wife receives a note, it means something as well to her, and it's very special. The congregation and people don't see the work behind the scenes and a lot of that work is your pastor's wife encouraging him to go on. It's a very difficult position to be in. A very hard position. There's a lot of responsibility. We just talked about being accountable to God for the work that you're doing. And your pastor goes home oftentimes very discouraged most likely to his wife and maybe set a tough day or a tough counseling session and whatever it might be. And she knows that, she senses that, and he brings that home with him sometimes. And so she supports him and encourages him, helps him get through the evening, reminds him why he's doing what he's doing in his call from the Lord. And so she, like my wife would do this all the time to encourage me and to remind me why I'm doing this in why I'm going through these hard times. And she would remind me of the different instances of when the Lord has responded during a difficult situation. When I'm when I can't see through the storm at the moment. And so your pastors wife does a lot of work. She's, she's your pastors you know counselor often time and confident and and he leans on her and she helps lift him up and this is a wonderful relationship and so acknowledging her contribution to the ministry that your pastor does is a good thing, and I think a necessary thing to say, hey, we know that you may be behind the scenes, but we know that your work is extremely

important. And we thank you for helping our pastor and being the good wife that you are. I mean, she would be very encouraged by notes of encouragement or a date night out with her husband who's always so busy. Things like that are tremendous gifts to her.

Kevin Stone

Yes. I think it's very important to include the pastors wives in the pastor's appreciation Sunday. Or month, because like Nelson, you were saying she is part of the ministry and the struggles that a pastor goes through, she routinely shares. She is. She helps to bear the burden and she needs to be honored and and encouraged as well as part of that ministry team. I would say to to really honor a pastor's wife and to encourage her during pastors appreciation month, just provide those words of encouragement, but also all year long give her the freedom to be herself and and find ways to relieve pressure from her. A lot of times pastor's wife in a church feels like she, by default, has to be the president of the ladies club or the Ladies Ladies Ministry Group and she has to be overseeing the Children's Ministry or she has to be doing these various various things. And I think that a church can go a long way to encouraging her by just saying, you know, you don't have to do all of these things. You know, we are here and we will. We will help with with whatever. But you don't have to be in charge of everything, and we will. We're here to help to bear your burden as well. And just providing that relief from pressure and freedom to serve God as she as she sees lead to do, and not be thrown into positions that she may not want or or need to be doing.

Shea Houdmann

So excellent. Both Kevin and Nelson, thank you for your insight, both into how do I encourage, how to show appreciation to a pastor, but also to your wives, some vitally important something we don't want to neglect, especially this month of Pastor Appreciation Month and every October. Encourage you find meaningful, tangible ways to show encouragement to, as Nelson said, get to know your pastor. So you can know what would be particularly encouraging to him. Because not all pastors the same, and not all pastors will feel is appreciated by the same types of things. So that's been the Got Questions podcast on Pastor Appreciation Month. Got questions? Bible as answers and we will help you find them.