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# How Does a Church Survive when a Pastor Leaves?

By **kay stone**

When you have a pastor who is just what your church needs, it's difficult to imagine the time when he may leave. If you've been in church for very long, chances are you have experienced a pastor leaving. Sometimes it's necessary and forthcoming. Other times, it hits you like a ton of bricks. How does a church survive when a beloved pastor is called to another church?

A pastor wears many hats. Most people have no idea what he actually does. He does much more than preach. A good pastor studies and prays to know the will of God concerning his messages and the direction of the church. He visits the sick and shut-ins. He counsels people on numerous topics, especially marriage and family. He has to deal with office work and crucial decision making. He has to referee between members of the congregation. He witnesses to the lost in his community and may serve on community counsels or boards. A good pastor also makes a point to know his members. For a large church, this takes dedication. A pastor is on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Wow, that's quite a load.

When you find someone who does all these things and more with the grace and joy of the Lord, you know you have someone worth keeping. When your pastor becomes a mentor and friend, it's hard to lose him.

Some churches become entirely too dependent on their pastor. They rely on him to do everything and make every decision. Some churches begin to look more to their pastor than to God. When this is the case and the pastor leaves, the church nearly falls apart.

Some members never return after the pastor leaves. If they are only there for a man, then they are not there for the right reasons. Some people grow weary in waiting for a new pastor, while others leave because bickering and arguing start. This happens because the pastor has always made the decisions and solved the problems and now everyone else wants to be in charge.

So what do you do? First you pray. Seek God's will for your life in this church and for the church itself. Be a part of the solution and not the problem. Refuse to start rumors or arguments. Be a peacemaker. Do what you can to help carry the load of the church until God sends a new pastor. Sometimes God wants the members of a church to learn to rely on Him again instead of relying on one man. God is to be the head of the church and every decision needs to be made through prayer and according to the Word of God.

It may be tempting to leave along with everyone else, but unless you know without a shadow of a doubt that God wants you to leave, don't. God needs you where you are. If everyone leaves, who will be left to carry on God's work at that church? Be an example of one who perseveres with joy and through prayer. You will not be the only one. There are others.

Find these others and begin a time of prayer to pray for your church. It could simply be an hour before church starts. Come together and pray for God's will to be done in your church. God promises that where two or three are gathered together in His name, He will be in their midst. Don't underestimate the power of prayer.

When others see that there are still people who love the church and care about its future, they will begin to care too. A little spark can start a huge fire. You can be that spark. Don't think that just one person can't make a difference. You can. Hang in there and God will be faithful to send you the pastor your church needs.

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