

1 Peter 5:1) I exhort the elders among you as a fellow elder and witness to the sufferings of Christ, as well as one who shares in the glory about to be revealed: 2) Shepherd God's flock among you, not overseeing out of compulsion but willingly, as God would have you; not out of greed for money but eagerly; 3) not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. 4) And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

This morning we come to the end of my journey with you as your Interim Pastor. For the past ten months, I've been working my way out of a job! My primary role as your Interim Pastor has been simply to get you ready for your new pastor. Now that the Pritchards are on their way, my last sermon is very intentional – *How to Treat Your New Pastor*. One the things I've tried to do as your Interim Pastor is to prepare you for the great future you have before you. God has positioned you with significant potential. Your future is NOW. You're already a great church. Please don't fret over this COVID-19 crisis. It will end, and when it does, you and your new pastor possess a tremendous opportunity to get to the next level and become an even greater, growing church.

In 1 Peter 5, Simon Peter merged the three biblical words to define and describe the function of pastor. It's the only place in the New Testament where all three of these words are utilized in the same text.

- **Elder = Leader**. Peter challenged the elders (*presbyteroi*), a word used throughout the New Testament identifying those who held leadership positions in the church. In 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 the Apostle Paul reminded the Corinthian Christians that though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not weapons of the world. On the contrary, we possess divine power to demolish strongholds. And in Ephesians 6, Paul challenged believers to put on the armor of God and arm themselves with the sword of the Spirit in order to fight against the strategies of Satan. This imagery positioned the church as the army of God, and all of us know that an army needs a leader, a general, someone to lead from the front. Pastors are leaders who lead from the front.

- **Pastor = Shepherd**. As a fellow elder (a *sympresbyteros*) Peter challenged the *presbyteroi* to *shepherd God flock among you (poimaino)*. The noun form of *poimeno* is *poimen*, the word often translated *pastor*. A pastor is a shepherd – one who tends the flock. Jesus' favorite designation for the church was the flock of God. Shepherds function as guardians, leaders, protectors, comforters, and at times rescuers of God's flock.

- **Overseer = Manager.** Peter's third descriptor is the word *episkopoi* – overseers – sometimes translated bishop. A pastor is not only a respected leader and shepherd, but also an overseer – a manager. In addition to being the army of God and the flock of God, the New Testament defined the church as the family of God. 1 Timothy 3 lists the character qualities of a pastor/overseer, and one of those descriptors is that he is “*one who manages his own household competently, having his children under control with all dignity. If anyone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of God's church?* (1 Timothy 3:4)

James Pritchard, like Perry Sanders and Steve Horn before him, is coming as your next leader, shepherd, and overseer. Many factors produce a successful relationship between pastor and people, but to a great degree, much of life pivots to how we treat one another. For my last sermon, I urge and implore you to embrace three attitudes and treat your new pastor this way.

1. HELP HIM, DON'T HOUND HIM. When James Pritchard arrives as your new pastor, I'll tell you a secret: He's only one man. He is not superman – he is not faster than a speeding bullet, he is not more powerful than a locomotive, he is not able to leap tall buildings in a single bound. He does not have all power – he can only be one place at a time – he is not a mind-reader. He cannot possibly do everything that needs to be done in this church. If he is going to function effectively and efficiently as shepherd, overseer, and leader, he is going to need everybody's help.

- **A Pastor's Success = sum total of Everybody's help.** If you want him to be one of the finest pastors in the history of First Baptist Lafayette, then every one of you must stand with him, alongside of him, and behind him to help him, and not hound him.

In my first sermon as your Interim Pastor, I introduced you to Beverly King, who was the richest man in Graham, Texas. He owned the hotel, was a major stockholder and a director at the bank, and had numerous other business interests. But he seldom dressed or acted the part. Most of the time he maneuvered around town in his work clothes. One day Mr. King visited local car repair shop, when a salesman pulled in with car trouble. The mechanic checked the car, and assured the man he could repair it. However, he would have to order the parts needed and have them delivered the next day. The salesman asked if there was a place to stay in town, and the mechanic pointed to the hotel down the street. It was then that the salesman noticed Mr. King standing off to the side. Thinking he was just a retired town loafer, the salesman asked Mr. King if he would mind carrying his bags to the hotel for him. Mr. King, who had a great sense of humor, played along and said he'd be glad to. As they walked down the street toward the hotel, the salesman

said, “As I drove into town I noticed a big house being built on the hill.” Mr. King responded, “Yes, I’ve seen it.” The salesman said, “That surprises me. Looking around, I wouldn’t think anybody in this town could afford a house like that. Do you know who it belongs to?” Mr. King answered, “Yes, it belongs to me.” The salesman was stunned. “It belongs to you? How in the world can you afford a house like that? Mr. King replied, “Because — all of these years, I’ve carried my own bags.” [Told by Paul Powell in **Getting the Lead Out of Leadership**, pp. 103-104]

Thanks for carrying your own bags during these transition months. Thanks for serving God utilizing your spiritual gifts. Thanks for shouldering some of the load of the church. If you keep doing that, then you will not have time to hound the pastor, or gripe about the pastor, or criticize the pastor. **Help him, don’t hound him.**

2. HEAR HIM OUT, DON’T HUSH HIM UP. Dr. Pritchard will do many things as your new pastor. He will plan and lead worship services. He will counsel with people. He will supervise the church staff. He will attend meetings. He will participate in all kinds of visitation. He will share Jesus with those spiritually lost and personally unchurched. He will marry people and he will bury people.

However,

- **A Pastor’s most important Responsibility = Preach God’s Word.** To preach effectively, week after week, will demand his time in prayer, in Bible study, and in seeking God’s will for the church. How well he preaches God’s Word will impact the effectiveness of all other pastoral duties. Sometimes that means that he will have to stand here and deliver a message that may be difficult and hard to bear. Sometimes he will stand here with a burden on his heart. At all times he is required to preach the whole counsel of God. Sometimes you will think that he is preaching directly to you. Sometimes, his message will not be popular.

A pastor stood one Sunday morning with a bandage on his chin. Before beginning his sermon, he explained his injury. He said, “I had my mind on my sermon this morning while shaving and cut my chin.” When the worship service ended, a church member was overheard saying, “He should have kept his mind on his chin and cut the sermon.” You may feel that way sometimes. But listen to how the Bible defines Pastor’s Preaching Obligation: 2 Timothy 4:2 -- “Proclaim the message; persist in it whether convenient or not; rebuke, correct, and encourage with great patience and teaching.” Your pastor is charged to preach, to deliver the Word, when you’re ready to hear it and when you’re not ready to hear it; when it’s easy and when it is hard. Sometimes his message will be a rebuke, sometimes a

correction, sometimes an encouragement. Regardless, it is your responsibility to **hear him out, not hush him up.**

3. HUG HIM, DON'T HURT HIM. One special gift your new pastor will always need, and everyone of you can give it to him.

- **A Pastor's greatest Need = Encouragement.** 2 Chronicles 15 records that the Spirit of God anointed a prophet named Azariah as he observed King Asa lead Judah in a season of renewal, calling the people to trust completely in the Lord. Azariah's inspired word for Asa is one of the great lines of encouragement in the Old Testament: *"But as for you, be strong; don't give up, for your work has a reward.* (2 Chronicles 15:9) Azariah's words, *"Don't give up"* translates a Hebrew phrase that means literally, *"Don't let your hands drop."* What a powerful picture of discouragement. When our hands drop, we are no longer getting the work done, and we open ourselves to the enemy's knockout punch.

The greatest threat to your new pastor is not moral disqualification, nor is it theological error. Some pastors are forced from their ministry positions for these reasons, but not most. Most who let their hands drop from the work do so because they give up, they lose courage, they grow weary and lose heart. An encouraging word can make all the difference. Your new pastor's going to have enough pressure and stress. He's going to have more than he can do. He will never get caught up. He will never please everybody. In fact, if James Pritchard would try to please everybody, he would end up pleasing nobody. His first priority is husband to Kim and father to Judah, Jolie, Josiah, John, and Jordan. He won't be a great pastor if he is not first a great husband and father. He is married to Kim – he is not married to First Baptist Church. First Baptist Lafayette is the Bride of Christ, not the bride of the pastor. For him to be everything he must be and do everything he must do, he will need all of the encouragement you can give him.

One of the easiest ways you can encourage your new pastor is to apply the "10-second rule." The "10-second rule" is what you can say or write in 10 seconds. Everybody can practice the "10-second rule." Proverbs 3:27 says, *"When it is in your power, don't withhold good from the one to whom it belongs."* And Proverbs 15:30 says, *"Bright eyes cheer the heart; good news strengthens the bones."* Now, with "no public gathering" and "social distancing" enforced, it will be awhile before you can practice the "10-second rule" in person. But you can begin to do it in these next few weeks with a short text, email, or phone call. *"Pastor, thanks for faithfully preaching God's Word every Sunday."* or *"Pastor, thanks for showing us what a faithful husband and father looks like."* or *"Pastor, thanks for treating all*

of us with kindness and respect.” 10 seconds. No long speech. Nothing but genuine praise and encouragement.

So hug him, don't hurt him. He needs your prayers – not your gossip. He needs your kindness – not your criticism. He needs your love – not your complaints. He needs your forgiveness – not your harshness. He needs your understanding – not your murmuring. And remember, what you do to him is magnified within his family. If you hurt him, you will hurt his family deeper. So why not practice the 10-second not just with James, but also with Kim. And while you're at it, why not practice the 10-second rule with your church staff, your deacons, your SS teachers. In fact, just go ahead and do it for everybody!

Dr. James Pritchard = Committed to NEXT. I leave you with one last thought. A Pastor's Effectiveness is marked by his willingness and courage to do what must be done NEXT! Dr. James Pritchard is committed to NEXT! He and his family have determined that next for them is First Baptist Lafayette. Today is the beginning of a new journey for both pastor and people. It all comes down to attitude. I know the heart of James and Kim Pritchard. They want to do their best. They are moving here because they are convinced it is God's will. They are excited. They are committed. They will work hard. They will labor long. They may lead you to the greatest days this church has ever experienced. It can happen, if you will pledge today to help them instead of hounding them, to hear them out instead of hushing them up, and to hug them instead of hurting them.