

50+ Pastors On Why They Love Pastoral Ministry

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

“Do you love me? Feed my sheep.”

~ Jesus of Nazareth

As pastors, we are completely dependent on the grace and presence of God. Like all followers of Jesus, we only bear fruit as we depend on the Vine.

A lot has been said over the years, about the challenges of pastoral ministry. But what do pastors love about ministry?

When I was a pastor I loved seeing people’s lives change when they meet Jesus and pursue discipleship. I loved being a part of people’s lives through the difficulties and the joys. I loved seeing broken relationships reconciled and restored. I loved seeing faith, hope, and love set people free from fear, bondage, addictions, and sin. I loved being surprised at how God is moving in the most unusual places and people. And I loved helping people discover and use their gifts and passions and creativity.

So, in January 2018 I asked pastors a simple question: “If you’re a current or former pastor, what do you love most about pastoral ministry?”

More than 50 pastors responded. These are male and female pastors. They represent a wide range of church traditions, ages, cultures, nationalities, and ethnicities. Some are new to pastoral ministry and some have been pastors for decades.

This handout is a summary of the full post, including 50+ quotes by pastors, which you can access here: <https://theglobalchurchproject.com/pastor/>

Here’s what they said about why they love pastoral ministry.

What Do Pastors Love About Pastoral Ministry?

Here’s a summary from the reflections pastors sent me. I hope this can be a resource for the new generation of pastors and an encouraging retrospective for older pastors.

- Seeing lives changed and transformed. Seeing God work in people’s lives, and marveling at his amazing grace. Seeing change, growth, and transformation, at so many different levels, and among so many people.
- Helping a community join in the mission of God in the world, and seeing that mission not only change neighborhoods, but also transform the church.
- Seeing people grow in discipleship and Christian maturity.
- Guiding people toward a deep love for God and passion for Jesus.
- Helping to humanize others and shift power dynamics. Teaching people to embrace and honor those who are marginalized and often forgotten in society (including undocumented immigrants, refugees, the poor, women and children, the mentally ill, and transient and homeless populations).
- Creating opportunities to learn, gather for table fellowship, and cultivate genuine relationship.

50+ pastors on why they love pastoral ministry. Compiled by Dr Graham Hill of Morling Theological College, Sydney, Australia. 28 January 2018. At TheGlobalChurchProject.com. URL: <https://theglobalchurchproject.com/pastor/>

- Journeying with people as they move toward healing and wholeness.
- Helping people see the *Imago Dei* in self and others.
- Accompanying God and people in change, hopes, and mystery.
- Building bridges for people to get to know who Jesus really is; not just what they have heard or assumed he is or is on about.
- Doing life with people, most of whom you'd ordinarily have little to do with, and learning so much more of God's kingdom together as a result.
- Being there when someone 'gets' something about Jesus for the first time which impacts their lives for good and sets them on a new path.
- Being given the privilege of access to people's lives (in good and difficult times) and having the opportunity to help them grow in the knowledge and love of Jesus so that we are blessed by his friendship.
- Learning to walk with God in peace and humility, and learning to walk with people in love and hope.
- Learning more about God through his Word and Spirit, and then getting to share that with your congregation for their encouragement. Encountering something wonderful in the Scriptures and then sharing the discovery with others. Sometimes pressing others toward growth only to realize that we are the ones who need to grow and change.
- Experiencing the passages of life with people (births, marriages, baby dedications, funerals, and so on), and together finding God in those moments. Journeying with people through their celebrations, but also the painful experiences of life.
- Witnessing the light in a person's eyes when they experience the freedom of Jesus Christ for the first time.
- Having the opportunity to intentionally and carefully shape a community of people into Christlikeness. The 'nuts and bolts' of ministry itself is rarely exciting, but keeping a grander destination in mind gives hope, energy, and joy.
- Seeing folk move beyond their usual securities (class, gender, race, profession, etc.) and become a new creation and community in Christ. Seeing people break down the walls that divide, and reach out beyond themselves to neighbors, other religious and ethnic groups, and so on, for the sake of the mission of God.
- Having freedom to choose how to spend your week. Being mostly free to use your time intentionally, reactively, responsibly, wastefully, wisely, missionally. Being free to use time at the disposal of the Spirit, or at our own inclination (hopefully, over time, our inclination walks in step with the Spirit).
- Having the flexibility of working hours to build a strong marriage and family.
- Giving your children the opportunity to watch you burn for something larger than yourself.
- Learning to pastor not only within a local church, but also within a city and neighborhood. Being stimulated—spiritually, missionally, and intellectually—and we seek to be a community that's fully engaged in what God is doing in our city and neighborhood and society.
- Being in ministry with friends, and making lifelong friendships.
- Enjoying the privilege of reading the biblical and cultural texts in community, and together discerning what God is saying or showing us.

- Developing a ministry team and doing life and leadership together. Working and growing together. Building something eternal together.
- Casting vision for life-giving community and missional outreach. Leading a community of believers who desire to live out authentic Christianity.
- Seeing a diverse range of ages, cultures, and backgrounds learning to love each other as family and use their gifts to grow God's church and follow God's mission. The joy of simply doing life together!
- Identifying, developing, and releasing leaders, and seeing them thrive in ministry.
- Relying on God's grace, power, strength, and wisdom as we are stretched way beyond our own capacity... and seeing him bring transformation to situations and people in our community that were written off as hopeless.
- Being involved in work that has eternal consequences.
- Having our lives interlaced with others in an amazing way... Being a spiritual leader in a vibrant, courageous, and redemptive community. Enjoying leading and serving such a community, but, more importantly, enjoying being part of it.
- Partnering with God in the transformation and multiplication of disciples.
- Having the privilege of better knowing our weaknesses and areas for growth, because there is nothing quite like the crucible of ministry to help us in that; the pleasure, pain and privilege of being a servant leader to the servants of the Servant of the King.
- Enjoying an intimate relationship with God as we walk with him and his people through life, and as we share together with God's people in ministry and mission.