

Understanding The Senior Pastor

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A significant requirement in working with anyone is understanding **WHO** they are! This is very true with the person who serves as your senior pastor. The more you ask God to help you understand him, the easier it will be for you to serve him.

Senior pastors are people

- with a **calling**
- with **passion**
- with **feelings**
- with **hopes** and **dreams**
- with **needs**
- with an **anointing**



The person who serves as a senior pastor was **placed by God Himself**

“Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. ...Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience.” Romans 13: 1-5

The person who serves as the senior pastor has devoted years of work, study, and sacrifice to get to where he is. God has led him through hard times, disappointments, and victories to shape who he is today. He is God’s anointed leader over the church! David made a powerful statement when he protected Saul, the anointed King, when Saul was trying to kill David. In 1 Samuel 24 David spares Saul’s life in a cave, and then replies to his companions who wanted him to kill Saul by saying,

“The LORD forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the LORD’s anointed. May I never lift my hand against him since he is the LORD’s anointed.”

1 Samuel 24: 6

God repeats this same caution in Psalm 105

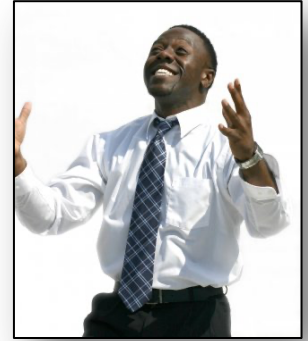
*“Do not touch my anointed ones;
do my prophets no harm.”*

Psalm 105:15

Regardless of how you feel about your senior pastor; regardless of what he does that offends you; you are bound to respect him and to do him no harm. I have found that seeking to understand him helps tremendously if you ever feel like you can’t support him. Here are some typical “characters” who have found their way to senior pastor positions. These descriptions might help you better understand your senior pastor. After each description, there are ways to serve him comfortably.

“The Preacher”

This senior pastor “character” lives for the weekly sermon! He has worked hard, studied hard and put up with some very difficult situations to get where he is today!



Who He Is:

- He has earned multiple graduate/seminary degrees.
- He felt a calling to proclaim the Word of the Lord from his youth.
- His whole life rotates around the weekly sermon.
- His family, friends, and co-workers all understand his passion.
- The operation of a church is a challenge because of the time it takes. He would rather be studying for his next sermon!

His Reactions To Situations:

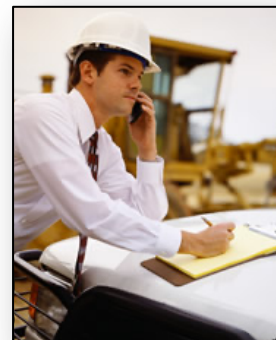
1. **Situation:** A request to make a “short announcement” during the worship service to invite more people to join the children’s ministry team.
Reaction: He may be very hesitant to give any time to anyone during the church service. Every “short announcement” takes time away from his sermon!
2. **Situation:** A weekly Bible study group from the church wants to collect an offering for a special service project they are conducting. They want to tell the people to give to this effort instead of putting their money in the church offering this week.
Reaction: He may be okay with this for one week, as long as they attend the service to hear his sermon.
3. **Situation:** An invitation for the senior pastor to come to three ministry training meetings to encourage the volunteers. The meetings occur during the next three Saturday mornings.
Reaction: He may decline because Saturday mornings are when he puts the finishing touches on his sermon for Sunday. He likes to protect his time on Saturday.

How To Honor Him

- Respect and honor his time. Make any meetings with him short and meaningful.
- Ask him for wisdom. He will enjoy the honor of giving his wisdom.
- Recall sermon points. Thank him for his perspectives and information.
- Limit midweek or evening interruptions. Do not call or text him after work!

“The Builder”

This senior pastor “character” is focused on building people! He values the building of a church structure because it is a place to meet and to build people.



Who He Is:

- His passion is to build a congregation by building the people.
- He desires to do all he can to support those within his local congregation so they will become “healthy,” strong Christians themselves.
- He views preaching as part of this calling, but he also views the other programs as equally important.

His Reactions To Situations:

1. **Situation:** A request to make a “short announcement” during the worship service to invite more people to join the children’s ministry team.
Reaction: He will be very happy to yield time during the service for this cause. Since building people is what he is all about, inviting them to join a growing ministry team is perfect! He may make his decision to let someone give an announcement based on the connection between the event and building people.
2. **Situation:** A weekly Bible study group from the church wants to collect an offering for a special service project they are conducting. They want to tell the people to give to this effort instead of putting their money in the church offering this week.
Reaction: He might approve this if the proposal highlights how the people who attend the Bible study will “grow” because of their project. He might also need to see how those who are being helped will be invited to come to church. He may be hesitant to approve this proposal because it would take money away from the church budget that is being used to build or improve the church facility.
3. **Situation:** An invitation for the senior pastor to come to three ministry training meetings to encourage the volunteers. The meetings occur during the next three Saturday mornings.
Reaction: He would definitely like to do this. He will view this as an excellent opportunity to encourage and support those who are serving within the church.

How To Honor Him

- Do your best! He doesn’t want any energy toward building people to be wasted!
- Understand his vision. He is passionate about building people. He may be skeptical about just having “fun.”
- Ask, “What do you need?” Since he is a builder of people, he values team effort and unity! The more people working together will produce more results!
- Handle the details. As a builder, he wants to “delegate and release.” He doesn’t like having to “hold the hands” of people who should be carrying out his plans.
- Suggest ideas, don’t push. Since he may have a very clear “picture” of what needs to be done, he may need more information about the new idea.
- Be willing to do more. Always do your best and be ready to do more!

“The Tycoon”

This senior pastor “character” is focused on corporate advances and financial strength. He views himself as a CEO of the church. His goal is to be “in the black” financially so that the work of the church can continue.



Who He Is:

- From an early age, he has dreamed of being the CEO of a large corporation.
- He has been told that he has a real talent for influencing people.
- He desires to be all that God has led him to be, and to build His Kingdom as well.
- He plans to develop people as successful team members (employees) of his growing business.

His Reactions To Situations:

1. **Situation:** A request to make a “short announcement” during the worship service to invite more people to join the children’s ministry team.
Reaction: He may be interested in this for the simple reason that he knows that the children’s ministry is a critical ministry for keeping families (and their wallets) coming back week-to-week. He will not be willing to make this announcement in lieu of the offering time, or if the offering time needs to be shortened.
2. **Situation:** A weekly Bible study group from the church wants to collect an offering for a special service project they are conducting. They want to tell the people to give to this effort instead of putting their money in the church offering this week.
Reaction: He most likely wouldn’t be in favor of this proposal. All income must be channeled through the church budget. He may be interested in investing in service projects only they can prove to increase church attendance and offerings.
3. **Situation:** An invitation for the senior pastor to come to three ministry training meetings to encourage the volunteers. The meetings occur during the next three Saturday mornings.
Reaction: He might be interested in doing this because the ministries are part of making the church “viable.” The ministries attract church visitors to return and to continue making their offerings.

How To Honor Him

- Don’t get in his way. Since he may not be as interested in “pleasing people,” he will probably not be interested in people who “get in his way.”
- Be effective at what you do. Don’t bother him with too many questions or needing support. Do what he has hired you to do.
- Respect and support him. As a “CEO,” he demands unwavering respect and obedience.
- Don’t question him. If you do question how he does things, always present your ideas as suggestions to improve the results.

“The Team Player”

This senior pastor “character” is focused on not standing apart from others. He likes being part of an effective team. He enjoys it when he can celebrate the success of others. To him, he is just one of the pastors at the church.



Who He Is:

- His highest desire is to build others to become a successful team of Christian pastors who are ministering to the community together.
- He doesn't really like the idea of being the “top dog” of the church.
- He understands his responsibility to be a leader, but he wants to empower others to lead as well.

His Reactions To Situations:

1. **Situation:** A request to make a “short announcement” during the worship service to invite more people to join the children’s ministry team.
Reaction: He would love this idea! He may ask if you would like an entire service devoted to this effort! He may want you to bring several current team members on stage to give their testimonies!
2. **Situation:** A weekly Bible study group from the church wants to collect an offering for a special service project they are conducting. They want to tell the people to give to this effort instead of putting their money in the church offering this week.
Reaction: He would probably strongly support this idea. He might say something like, “This is perfect! This church is the work of the Lord, and He will provide what we need!”
3. **Situation:** An invitation for the senior pastor to come to three ministry training meetings to encourage the volunteers. The meetings occur during the next three Saturday mornings.
Reaction: Because he is all about team efforts, he will be honored to do this! He might ask you if these are the only three times he can do this!

How To Honor Him

- Build your team. Keep him informed (there can never be too much communication) about the needs and success of the children’s ministry team.
- Work well with others. Be a positive, encouraging part of other teams or church leaders.
- Celebrate others’ success. Don’t seek personal affirmation apart from the “team effort” of those who serve in the church. Be careful not to use the pronoun “I.” Use “we” instead.
- Express your satisfaction with your position and team. Be positive about what is happening and be willing to do more!
- Compliment him. He won’t want direct, personal compliments too often, but it is good to let him know that his work in building the church “team” is very good!

“The Barbarian”

This senior pastor “character” is effective at getting things done, but he is not too popular with those who serve under him. This type of senior pastor is perhaps the most difficult to serve under.



Who He Is:

- He believes he has been called to battle the forces of evil in whatever form they appear
- His passion prompts him to deal harshly with people at times.
- He believes that dealing harshly with people is necessary if they would stand in the way of furthering God’s work, or they would slow the progress down because of their complacency.

His Reactions To Situations:

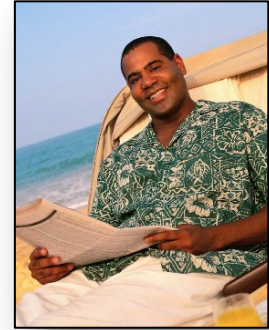
1. **Situation:** A request to make a “short announcement” during the worship service to invite more people to join the children’s ministry team.
Reaction: A “Barbarian” instantly estimates the value of a possible decision based on either “how it looks,” or “how it makes me look.” Because of this, the “Barbarian” would probably deny this request. He wouldn’t want to look “weak” by asking for help.
2. **Situation:** A weekly Bible study group from the church wants to collect an offering for a special service project they are conducting. They want to tell the people to give to this effort instead of putting their money in the church offering this week.
Reaction: A “Barbarian” wants to control every aspect of the church or corporation. This proposal might aggravate him because a Bible study is venturing out to a service project “on their own.” He most likely would deny the request to “sidetrack” the offering money to this project. He might be so aggravated at the request that he might disband the Bible study altogether.
3. **Situation:** An invitation for the senior pastor to come to three ministry training meetings to encourage the volunteers. The meetings occur during the next three Saturday mornings.
Reaction: He might be interested in visiting one of the three sessions if his visit increases his reputation. A “Barbarian” is always looking for opportunities to “leverage” his reputation and therefore increase his control.

How To Honor Him

- Don’t get in his way. Don’t ever appear to question him.
- Be effective at what you do. Don’t give him any reason to doubt your effectiveness.
- Set clear standards and policies in your ministry. The “Barbarian” likes control and he views strong policies as protection for his corporation.
- Encourage him. Everyone, including the “Barbarian,” appreciates encouragement. To the “Barbarian,” encouragement is interpreted as honor.
- Reflect his vision in your ministry. This is a safe position. Be a “team player.”

“The Golfer”

This senior pastor “character” is happy at his current position and stage in life. He most likely worked very hard in former churches and positions. He is older now and is not as interested in working so hard to establish his position. He is very interested in delegating and developing the staff under him. Leading the church or developing his staff is only valuable if his personal time for golf is not threatened.



Who He Is:

- He’s worked hard to become the leader of a local church.
- His dream is to hire enough staff to make the church run well without his intervention.
- He loves to golf and spend time with his family. His workdays are limited to “emergency” situations or study for Sunday’s sermon.
- His administrative duties are all delegated to others, as long as they abide by his wishes.

His Reactions To Situations:

1. **Situation:** A request to make a “short announcement” during the worship service to invite more people to join the children’s ministry team.
Reaction: Since the “Golfer” is very relaxed, he would probably agree to this request. In fact, in order to take up more time, he might invite you to take more time.
2. **Situation:** A weekly Bible study group from the church wants to collect an offering for a special service project they are conducting. They want to tell the people to give to this effort instead of putting their money in the church offering this week.
Reaction: The “Golfer” wouldn’t worry too much about any missed offering money, as long as his salary was not threatened. He generally likes fun ideas, and this idea is something that he would probably want more of.
3. **Situation:** An invitation for the senior pastor to come to three ministry training meetings to encourage the volunteers. The meetings occur during the next three Saturday mornings.
Reaction: He would probably be fine with visiting the trainings (for a few minutes), unless these meetings occurred during his Tee time.

How To Honor Him

- Be as independent as possible. His time is flexible, but he doesn’t like to get bogged down in administrative issues.
- Don’t call him on weekdays or evenings. This is his own time, and he doesn’t want to be interrupted.
- Don’t question his priorities. He might be sensitive to this because he has probably been accused of not being “in the office” enough.
- Encourage him. Strangely enough, his golf game may not be the best, and he projects that same opinion onto his ministry. He enjoys being encouraged and complimented.
- Involve him cautiously. He watches his time carefully. He also doesn’t want to get too involved in the “workings” of the church.