

Who Has The Toughest Job in the World?

If someone were to ask what is the toughest job in the world, what answer would you give them? Right away, one can find several of the most common answers that we would think of. Firefighter, police officer, crab fisherman (thank you, “Deadliest Catch”), or oil rig worker, for instance, tops the list.

The Toughest Vocation of All

What if I suggested a vocation that may be as tough – if not tougher – than the list above? The job that I’m referring to is that of a **pastor**.

Really, a pastor? Absolutely! I would imagine that after making such a bold assertion, the average reaction that I would get might be scoffing, and possibly even laughter. However, this is one profession that is just as tough and as messy as the jobs listed above, and the number one reason why is because it involves dealing with the toughest, yet most priceless, product of all: people.

What Do Pastors Deal With?

In the April 2008 edition of Willow Magazine, Christian researcher George Barna and his team published some staggering statistics that peeled back the veil of the minds and hearts of many pastors. It asked them to honestly and objectively answer questions dealing with many of the toughest issues that they face. Obviously, the results generated are merely black and white facts on a page.

As you read each statistic, allow yourself the freedom to think about your own pastor or anyone in your life that you know who may have affected your life in some way, big or small, by remaining faithful to the ministry to which God has called them to. In fact, maybe for the first time ever, put yourself in **their** place as you read what they have revealed. You might just find the following data hitting uncomfortably close to home: **1500** pastors leave the ministry **every month** due to moral failure, spiritual burnout, or conflict in their church.

- **90%** of pastors work more than 46 hours per week.
- **81%** suffer marriage problems due to insufficient time with their wives.



- **80%** of seminary and Bible college graduates will leave ministry within the first 5 years;
- **80%** of pastors believe their ministry affected their families negatively;
- **70%** of pastors don't have someone whom they consider a close friend – someone they can confide in.
- **60%** of pastors' wives hold full-time jobs or are involved in careers to meet family needs.
- **50%** of pastors would leave if they believed they could make a living doing something else.
- **33%** believed ministry was a hazard to their family.

In the face of all of these statistics, the question that begs to be asked is, “Why would anyone enter into a vocation with so much adversity against them from the start?” The answer is clear: it's their calling. It's their passion. Seeing lives changed because of Jesus Christ's redeeming work on the Cross drives them to persevere another day. And at night, most pastors don't lay their head on their pillows and ask themselves, “Was today too difficult?” Instead they ask, “Was it *worth* it . . . was one more life changed today?” The resounding “yes” is what keeps them going. Although some may classify it as a tough, thankless job, most pastors would undeniably admit that it is definitely the most rewarding.

So, with over 450,000 churches throughout the United States alone, one question remains: how do you adequately say “thank you” to someone who gives so much of themselves, laying aside their own lives for the sake of serving and caring for the spiritual health of others? Depending on the level of forethought and creativity, there are many ways to thank a pastor!

20 Ways To Thank Your Pastor

- **Simply Say “Thank You”** – While blatantly obvious, sometimes weeks go by for a pastor without someone verbally saying thank you.
- **Provide a Vacation** – Without a doubt, there is one thing that every single pastor absolutely needs no matter who they are: rest. Whether this is dubbed a vacation, trip, or sabbatical, all of the above allow for your pastor to break away from life for a set amount of time for the purpose of rest, relaxation, and recovery. Consequently, this period usually serves to restore fresh passion and vision as well, decreasing the likelihood of pastoral “burnout.”
- **Handwritten Notes** – These are always special to receive, especially if you highlight something that “struck you” from a recent message or sermon.
- **Photo Book** – This is an inexpensive way to show your appreciation by gathering photos and notes from members that showcase special moments in the history of your church.
- **Prayer** – This may not seem like much of a thank you, but there is no greater way to support your pastor and encourage or appreciate them than forming a prayer group that prays regularly for him and his family. This can also be done as

a group during a prayer meeting/breakfast or a special night of prayer involving the entire congregation.

- **Gift Certificates** – This can range anywhere from restaurants to bookstores to movie tickets. The possibilities are endless and the pastor usually gets to include his wife on this one as an added bonus!
- **Lawn Care** – This is a unique gift where you can arrange for free lawn care, whether you do it yourself or arrange to pay a service to do it.
- **Special Acts of Service** – You can ask families in the church to do something creative or special, such as provide a meal with dessert, wash their cars, etc
- **Remember Special Dates** – Everyone, no matter who they are, loves to be appreciated. Show your pastor how much you love him by remembering special anniversaries, such as his birthday, the date that he came to this church, or his wedding anniversary.
- **Lessons/Gifts For a Hobby** – Many pastors love to golf. Some like to read while others like to fish. No matter what their hobby is, you can always find a way to appreciate him by paying for lessons or going along with him to “play” and not talk about church!
- **Plant a Tree** – This is a great way to say thank you in honor of your pastor.
- **Video Interview** – Be creative! You can record video interviews from members of the church sharing how they have been blessed by his ministry to them.
- **Cards/Crafts** – Ask members of the church to send cards or gifts that they’ve made to his home. Remember to include the pastor’s wife and her supportive role!
- **Special Service** – Hold a special celebration service to pray and thank God for the lives of your pastors and their families.
- **Kid’s “Thank You’s”** – Have the kids design and create posters with their handprints/footprints and hang them around the church.
- **Money** – Many pastors take a pay cut to serve in this role. The gift of money, given by members during a special appreciation event, can help to pay for car repairs or any other financial burdens that are unexpected.
- **Gym/Health Club Membership** – This is always a great investment for your pastor!
- **Free Repairs** – Organize a group that is willing to say thanks by helping the pastor take care of any repairs around the church or their personal home or car.
- **Child Care** – If your pastor is younger, you can offer to say thank you by helping to watch their children while they have a night out or go to a Bed and Breakfast for the weekend.
- **Thank the Pastor’s Wife** – Remember the statistic: 60% of pastor’s wives work full time to support the home. Thanking your pastor’s wife for all that she does to support her husband and God’s church can be an incredible lift to her spirit and, consequently, your pastor’s spirit as well.