

Ministering in a small church? Persevere and trust in God

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BELTON—Demetrio Salazar recognizes serving in a small church with limited resources not only demands perseverance, but also people who place their hope entirely on God.

Salazar began serving Primera Iglesia Bautista of Belton in 2003 as a member of the church before the congregation asked him to become associate pastor, working alongside Pastor Eliseo Arriaga. When Arriaga retired from the pastorate in 2014, Primera Iglesia Bautista called Salazar as pastor.

Through the years, Salazar's vision of serving others in response to Christ's calling remains the same, he said.

But performing that task becomes more complicated when a church cannot fully support its pastor financially or add additional staff, he noted.

As president of Compañerismo Paul C. Bell—the Hispanic Baptist association of churches in Bell County and surrounding areas—Salazar knows other congregations find themselves in similar difficulties.

Multiple responsibilities

Pastors grow weary when they feel the need to oversee and carry out most church duties, he observed.



Pastor Demitrio Salazar and his wife Lidia serve at Primera Iglesia Bautista of Belton. He also is president of the area compañerismo. (Photo courtesy of Demitrio Salazar)

Salazar acknowledges the multiple responsibilities ministers—particularly those who serve bivocationally—must bear.

“Besides the pastor’s duties at church, they must also care for their families, their other jobs and their health,” he added.

Churches may experience difficulties due to financial constraints, but their future is not dependent on what they have or do not have, he stressed.

“Resources are certainly helpful and maybe they often accelerate us towards the goals we have. But the commitment people have must be found in discipleship, in their commitment to follow Jesus,” Salazar said. “That is the most important resource—the commitment people have in following Jesus.”

In addition to the challenges small church budgets present, Salazar also recognizes the need for Hispanic congregations to address generational and language differences.

Congregations may be tempted to prioritize preserving social traditions, but Primera Iglesia Bautista in Belton seeks to adapt its methods of communication to relate better to younger generations, Salazar said. The message remains the same, but the media and the ways the message applies continue to change, he added.

“Even with these challenges, we hope in God more pastors and leaders will come to renew the vision of our churches and help guide the next generation,” Salazar said.

“As leaders grow or as new leaders come here, we trust God will use them to guide the church.”

Learn from others, share good ideas

For now, Salazar continues to invite others to follow the example of Jesus and give their lives to service. And as president of the regional *compañerismo*, he seeks to share best practices with other congregations.

Visiting churches in other states allows Salazar to observe the work of congregations that carry out their mission with limited resources—even less than his church.

He also expressed gratitude for the opportunity to work with other churches through the Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas and the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

No church will have everything together before its members dedicate their lives in service to Christ, but God promises the story will not end there, Salazar remarked. With resources or without them, God continues to

transform individuals, congregations and communities, he said.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The second paragraph was edited after the article originally appeared.