

Richard Ray: Pastors, love and care for your children

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Since I grew up a preacher's kid, I know the stress pastors' children go through. I read where 45 percent of preachers' kids end up in counseling for the rest of their lives, and 40 percent of those kids will not attend church because of how the church treated their family. It is not surprising, although disheartening, to see so many sons and daughters of pastors struggling in their relationship with the Lord.

✘ Richard Ray Pastors all struggle to keep their homes together while their children are attacked by Satan to disrupt the ministry. So often, the struggles a pastor and his family face become overbearing and cause them to ask, "Is it worth it?" Some sources say 50 percent of ministers do not last five years, and 80 percent of ministry spouses feel their mate is overworked. This especially is true for bivocational and small-church pastors, whose time is divided between church, family and occupation.

So, how can a pastor sway this pendulum the other way?

First, learn the art of time management, which means a pastor must ✘ listen to the Creator of time. When a pastor follows the will of the Lord, the Lord will provide time for his family. When a pastor attempts to allot time for his family and his calling, the time gets away from him. A pastor must allow the Lord to manage time, and he will be amazed how this will draw his family closer together.

Second, listen to your children. So often, pastors' kids believe their parents are not paying attention to them. Mom and Dad are so focused on their call to the ministry or their ministry and occupation that they forget they also are called to be there for their family. Take time to listen to your

children with the same heart of compassion as you do with those whom you do not know. Children can sense if you are genuinely listening to them. A pastor told me his father was a terrific pastor but a terrible dad. Make sure you listen to your children. It makes a difference.

Third, compliment your children. Pastors are great at publicly and privately complimenting others in the church and those who serve in ministry. But at home, they often forget they have a family who have sacrificed equally for the ministry—and in some cases, much more. So often, the accolades a pastor shares are more for others than for their family, leaving the children seeking emotional satisfaction elsewhere.

Fourth, love your children unconditionally. I have been guilty of reminding my children of their sins, but with others, I forgive and forget. Pastors often tend to show more grace toward strangers than they do their own family. The same unconditional love you show toward others must be the same unconditional love you show to your family. Proverbs 22:6 says, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” Pastors have the responsibility to shepherd their church; however, they also have the responsibility to raise up their family in the Lord.

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Richard Ray is executive director of the Bivocational/Small Church

Association and director of missions for Tri-Rivers Baptist Area.