



## **The Beauty of Longevity**

*By Jody Hart*

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I have enjoyed learning from plenty of well-known pastors—whether it be at a youth summer camp, at a conference, through reading a book, or by listening to them online. God has gifted His worldwide church with so many skilled expositors and orators. And now, more than ever, access to the content these men are producing is highly accessible. I can go on the internet and explore sermon libraries and commentaries on basically any passage of scripture or topic that I am thinking on from preachers and teachers, not only of our day and time, but throughout church history.

While I am incredibly grateful for the truths God has taught me from these various teachers and venues, there is something unique that comes from the teaching at my local church from the under-shepherd God has placed over me. My Pastor doesn't have a unique message. His is the same Gospel handed down from the Apostles. What my Pastor has that no other teacher or preacher has is consistency and longevity in my life. I have had the privilege of sitting under his teacher for twenty years. In that time, I have graduated college, started my career, gotten married, gone from a career woman to a stay at home mom, and given birth to two children. I have experienced times of rejoicing as well as times of deep sorrow and pain. And my Pastor has gone through various life stages along with rejoicing and deep sorrow as well. I have watched him live out the faith that he teaches. He has counseled me personally and spoken words of admonishment, affirmation, and encouragement along the way.

I also have benefited from watching his personal growth and his theology being crystalized throughout these years. As his understanding of truth grows, my understanding grows. As he obeys the Lord in specific areas, it encourages me to obey as well. As I see him pressing on in ministry and running hard after Christ in service to Him, it fuels my service and ministry. Iron sharpens iron (*Prov.27:17*), and that is something that happens as those two iron pieces are connected. They cannot sharpen one another when they are apart.

All of these things give the local church pastor a special role in the lives of his people and merits a special honor. Not only has he expounded the Word to me, but he has also shared his very life with me. Not only has he given me applications to the Word, but he has also applied these things before my eyes and personally exhorted me to do the same. He has cared for me as I've walked through many dark days. He has rejoiced with me as well. Through it all, we have prayed for one another and seen God answer those prayers according to His will.

I am grateful to God for the many faithful teachers and preachers He has gifted and allowed me to be exposed to. But there is a specific preacher He has sovereignly chosen to care for my soul. My Pastor. Oh, how thankful I am for him.