

# To Whom Does the Pastor Submit?

BY JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

The first time Willie Mays, then a rookie outfielder, came to bat against major league pitching, he faced another future Hall of Famer, Warren Spahn. The great pitcher stood on the mound, 60-feet-6-inches away from home plate. After shaking off two signals from his catcher, the left-hander wound up and fired a sinking curve. Mays smashed it 400 feet for his first big-league home run.

Later a sportswriter asked Spahn about the pitch. His answer was classic: "It looked great for the first 60 feet."

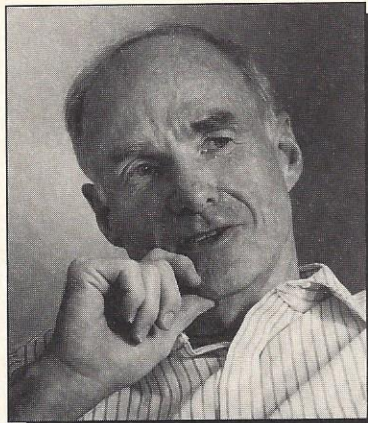
The typical pastor looks great until crisis comes. But after the devil belts one of his fancy curveballs back into his face, there is suddenly a need for help.

To whom does he turn?

In an article in this issue, Foursquare pastor Louis Templeman notes that many pastors are leading their independent churches to duck under a denominational umbrella for protection. One of the reasons, he says, is so the pastor will have someone to talk to in times of trouble.

There is validity in this, of course. Many pastors thrive under the denominational covering. However, submission to external oversight will never substitute for the necessity of a pastor submitting to elders or spiritual peers within the local body. This is true even if a church belongs to a denomination and the pastor is "in submission" to a bishop, overseer or district superintendent.

None of the above can offer hands-on supervision, correction, or even friendship.



This can only be found when the pastor is secure enough in his call to make friends with and submit to local elders (or their equivalent).

Time after time I have sat with pastors, both independent and denominational,

who have confided: "I have no one I can talk to...If I tell my denominational overseer, I'll be forced out of the ministry. If my church board discovers I have feet of clay, I'll be thrown out."

There are no quick fixes in times like these. A pastor needs to start years before—or start now in anticipation of the future—and make *friends* with his key men. I'm talking about the kind of friendship that will allow you to say anything you want about anything you feel (or have done) and have that friend stick with you—without defiling your confidence.

Every pastor, denominational or independent, needs men like this in his local church—men to whom he can submit, knowing they have but two things at heart: the kingdom of God and the personal welfare of the pastor (and his family).

Such submission is dangerous. But there are times when a shepherd needs to be nurtured back to wholeness. No overseer, no denomination can do it. It can only be done in a local body with men who will hold you accountable while at the same time loving, caring, understanding and forgiving you back to spiritual health.

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