



# Inspired to Bless Others

**L**ong-term pastoral faithfulness can lead to ministry effectiveness. When biblical faithfulness is modeled by the pastor, it becomes a way of life for the church members. This is the story of **Bethel Baptist Church** in Salem and its pastor, Hilton Jeffries.

Pastor Jeffries, a pastor's son, has led Bethel Baptist for more than 17 years. When he arrived, the church was quite different. His commitment to biblical inerrancy and conservative doctrinal beliefs proved controversial for some. However, through steady leadership and consistent biblical preaching, Pastor Jeffries made a lasting impact. Over time, he looked for opportunities to make a difference in the community, and his strategic patience yielded a congregation that is now eager to bless their neighbors.

Pastor Jeffries summed up his journey: "I have found the saying to be true that you often underestimate what can be done over a decade, while overestimating what can be done in a couple of years."

Many pastors find themselves in situations of church turnaround and revitalization. Key principles apply in such situations, and one of the most important is exercising strategic patience. Patience is vital, but it's not about waiting passively—it's about waiting with wisdom and being ready to act when the right opportunities arise. Pastor Jeffries shared, "It takes time to build relationships and teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

Bethel Baptist saw exciting things happen in 2024; these things include:

- Nearly 40 baptisms
- Church members actively leading their friends to faith in Christ
- Outreach to local schools, in partnership with other churches, providing backpacks and shoes for over one hundred children
- A pastoral staff member entering local police chaplaincy after years of ministering to the city's police force, thus transitioning to bi-vocational ministry

Regular outreach ministries at Bethel Baptist include:

- A monthly "First Responders Luncheon," where the Gospel is shared with local first responders
- Grief Share, which continues to impact local families
- Soccer skills camps that reach several students
- Connect groups that regularly reach into the community
- Impact Salem, an annual event where the church's regular worship service "hits the streets" for community outreach
- Partnerships with the local homeless ministry

Pastor Hilton Jeffries rejoiced in the church's partnerships, saying, "the SBCV has been a great partner. We know that we are not alone as we minister. The resources and relationships through our SBCV family have proven invaluable. We want to be a blessing to many different people, and our network allows us to do that." ■