

How Pastors are using PastorsLine to engage with members and guests

Bonus: How to Rocket Launch your Sermon Series

About this guide

In this guide, we are going to give you very practical tips on how you, as a Pastor, head elder or church leader can communicate more effectively using text messaging. Having worked with hundreds of churches over the last 6 years, we've learned along with churches and have seen how these shared tips have helped churches save time and cut through the communication bottleneck. Most of it goes beyond just having a tool. It's more a matter of knowing how to use it.

90% of this guide will be practice-tested data, including copy and paste templates you can use this weekend. We don't share anything which hasn't been tested or isn't informed by our experience, churches' feedback and real data.

This will include:

- A Sermon Series campaign
- Facilitating the Discipleship process with new guests
- Encouraging and motivating your church
- A few other typical communication examples for the 'Swiss-knife' pastors
- Pro-tips to help you use texting effectively without wearing out the saints
- How to get started for free and test out these concepts this weekend

Disclaimer: Communication strategies and digital tools aren't "magical" pills that solve all churches' problems. We know there is a spiritual component and many other layers. This guide is specific to tweaking the way pastors and leaders communicate via texting, with specific tips and examples to help you do more in less time.

Is PastorsLine for Pastors only?

Actually, no. A Pastor, as we may know, means a shepherd, from the Latin verb pascere - to lead to pasture, cause to eat.

So, shepherds care for, nourish, and protect their flocks (whether a few animals or hundreds).

If you are caring for others like shepherds care for their flocks, then, guess what, you ARE symbolically a “Pastor”, and this tool is for you (even if that’s not your ‘official’ title).

We think you already get what the PASTORS means to us, but the LINE in PastorsLine suggests a connection between your flock and you. It’s a direct line for encouragement, help, prayer and support.

PastorsLine gives churches the tools to connect with their flocks in the right way. Although it pales in comparison, it resembles the connection that our Heavenly Father provides to us.

Now, let’s address the elephant in the room.

The kind of Pastor you are varies based on the size of your church. You might be a ‘Swiss knife’ leader who has to do it all or someone who has a large team that helps but who needs to manage egos, budgets and people. Regardless of where you fall in the spectrum, we know that many Pastors are at times overworked and many are underpaid—a deadly combination.

Here are some facts from the **study** conducted by ChurchLeadership.org between January 2015 and June 2016. A total of 8,150 participants from the US and abroad took part:

- 79% of Evangelical and Reformed Pastors are happier personally
- However, 54% of Pastors still work over 55 hours a week
- 57% can't pay their bills
- 54% are overworked and 43% are overstressed
- 35% suffer from battle depression
- 26% are overly fatigued
- 28% are spiritually undernourished and 9% are burnt-out
- 23% are still distant to their families
- 18% work more than 70 hours a week and face unreasonable challenges
- Yet, 90% feel honored to be a Pastor!

One area (specific to what we do) in which we saw satisfied / balanced Pastors and top church leaders were those who understand how to communicate effectively with their church and staff or are surrounded by people who can. No matter where you fall on this spectrum, we think this practical guide will give you at least 1 tip to help you improve how you communicate via text with your staff, ministry leaders and church. In fact, you should be able to implement these tips this weekend.

Communication isn't just texting, but using texting with a cloud-based solution is one of the most effective ways that Pastors are able to do more in less time, staying connected to their audience's needs while creating some insulation between their own spaces and those of their audience.

You probably get how texting is THE most communicative, digital option at the moment, but just in case we've assumed too much, you should know that 90% of texts are read within 3 minutes. This compares with a 20% **email read rate** and a median 16% **Facebook engagement rate**. Despite this huge difference, we don't think it is an EITHER OR decision but rather an AND methodology in which texting, combined with a well-thought-out digital strategy, is crucial for Pastors.

What about phone calls? Personal visits?

Again, it's not an **either or** but rather, "How best do I pastor my church with my limited time and resources while living a balanced life and taking care of my family?"

If a Pastor had the ability to clone himself to match the number of people in his audience, then technology would be obsolete.

Another option is that Pastors can disciple others, but this takes time and energy, and you still may not have enough people to create personal connections and pastor your flock.

Small group leaders, then, play a very vital role in bridging this gap, but they may not always address the role that a Pastor can play or wants to play. Leaving all communications up to your church communicators may create a void, causing a disconnect with your church members and guests.

The question is, how can Pastors scale their personalized interaction, including making it difficult for anyone to fall through cracks in their discipleship process, while maximizing their time and living a balanced life without burnout?

The base

Different Pastors have different roles depending on their church setup and amount of staff. We are going to talk about the top things Pastors are usually involved with. If you're the Pastor of a smaller church, you might be doing much more beyond just pastoring. In that case, you might be interested in some of our other guides which deal with specific areas like communicators or small group leaders, etc. In this guide, we are just focusing on the high levels of what a Pastor should be doing and how texting can help.

Sermon attendance booster and Follow-up strategy

Texting can be used before and during each sermon, but it is especially effective when used with a new series or special topics. Where relevant, after each explanation, you will find swipe copies of all the texts mentioned.

Before

Before the event, you are looking to get people's attention, perhaps even have them 'do some homework' in preparation by reading a chapter from the Bible or other resource material. The **Before text** is a call to action, engaging your congregation and creating interest to get people through the doors.

BEFORE: During the week

Previous Attendees (Bonus)	Church	Guests
[First Name], we are having another series on the family. If you are interested, we would love to have you join us on [Date/Day]. Know we've been praying for you.	Hi [First Name]. This week we are launching a series on [Family Life]. We understand that our church isn't immune to the pains many families face today. To get the most out of this series, please read this [book-chapter] [link] to prepare before we dive into this topic over the next [2/3/4 weeks]. Hang in there. Know that God is always able and the enemy is a liar. -Pr. Mark	Hi [First Name], this is Pr. Mark from [Church XYZ]. I am sending you this message as you once [filled out a form/asked about study] on families. I am launching a new series starting [Date] that I thought you might be interested in. Know I am praying for you and if you can, would love to have you join us.

Pro tip: Segmentation is the one thing you can do to maximize the effectiveness of any communication you do. Sending blast-outs to your entire list may be the easiest thing to do, but it's usually less effective than when you segment.

During the Sermon or Teaching

This can vary by the focus in church, but let's look at the church favorites using the example of a Family Life series:

- **Sending in questions** — During the sermon, attendees can text in their questions to a number. Any questions not dealt with during the event can be followed-up with later. Using an online system will allow you to categorize the answers, get your team to help and de-clog your personal phone. Most online solutions offer an option to use a mobile app or desktop (better for responding to a lot of messages) .
- **Giving feedback** — The polling feature (offered by PastorsLine.com) allows attendees to text in their responses according to a set of multiple choice options. Arranging for these responses to be shown live on a big screen is excitingly engaging. Read about polling [here](#).
- **Getting more information** — Attendees text a campaign keyword (i.e. 'FAMILY') to your number and receive an immediate autoreply, linking to sermon notes and/or further relevant resources.
 - Additionally, the campaign keyword function creates a group of all those who texted in—so now you have a segment of people who are interested in the topic of Family Life and may be interested in other resources or small group support on this topic. You can couple this with the Data Capture and Automated Messages campaigns (like what PastorsLine offers) to capture their names, emails and numbers (no links), and automatically send them follow-up messages over a period of days or weeks. Manually sending group messages will be an option as well. Each person will get the text individually.

Follow-up after the Sermon / Series

Following up continues the conversation since helping people to act on what they have heard is critical. Keep in mind that too frequent texts tend to turn people off. One or two a week about important things usually hits the right note. Segmentation allows you to send more texts however. You might be able to send daily encouragements to those who explicitly opted to join your 7-day, Family Life Reboot campaign.

It is important to realize that one group text (manual or automated) is still better than not following up at all. In other words, immediate, short-term follow-up makes a significant difference. If you as a Pastor cannot get to it, we suggest delegating the task to a member of staff or a team.

If you can or if you are already doing follow-ups via emails, postcards and even texts, segmentation might be your pro-tip to begin seeing a healthier church.

FOLLOW-UP: After the sermon/series

Attendees	Church (for those who missed the event)	First or Second time guests
Hi [First Name]. We had a great time this weekend. Really touched on an important topic. So happy you were with us. Just wanted to make sure you got the link to the [book/material/resources] we talked about [link]. I highly recommend taking action by at least reading the [material/Chapter 1/Section 4/etc.]. This is such a critical issue for our [church/our nation] that we have set up an online study group. Please text your questions to [link] and check out the discussion on [link]. -Pr. Mark	Hi [First Name]! We had a powerful weekend discussing the family. If you didn't have time to attend and couldn't stream it online, here are the recorded sessions with notes. [link] If this isn't for you, I am encouraging you to share this with someone who might need support. It includes information on how to join our newly-formed support group that meets on Tuesday. -Pr. Mark	Hi [Firstname]! This is Pr. Mark with [Church Name]. Thank you for joining us this weekend for our family life series. Just letting you know I am praying for you.

Facilitating the Discipleship process

One of the Pastor's primary roles is to facilitate the discipleship process—from guest to member to family to leader (repeat).

Guests falling through the cracks is usually one of the main contributors to a lack of church growth. It's usually not the church's direct doing. Understandably, you are so busy with ensuring the guests are accommodated and the Word is preached. However, quick and immediate follow-up has proven to be critical to ensure that you build those strong, healthy relationships which keep people coming back and taking those critical next steps toward Christ.

Guest follow-up can be an automated process (a series of pre-written texts) or it can be a manual text you send out to new guests the Monday after each service. Although we have other guides which walk through this topic in depth (www.DigitalConnectTexts.com) and might fall under the job description of the church communication or guest services team, here's a summary of the texts you can automatically send to your first-time guests to get them engaged. The key is to (1) capture their data including the most critical contact: mobile phone and (2) get them back as a second-time guest without overwhelming them by asking for too much information.

Digital Connect Texts (automated data capture)

	First-time Guest	Returning Guests
Capture first name	We are so glad you are here! We would love to connect with you! Please reply with your full name.	Thank you for visiting us again, [First Name]. We've already saved your information in our system. I would love to connect with you. What's the one thing we can do to help you this week?
Capture email	Thank you for sharing your name with us [First Name]. To fully update your record, can you reply with your email address?	
Last message	We are glad you are here, and we look forward to seeing you again next weekend!	

Automated Messages (follow-up)

	First-time Guest	Staff
On Monday after the weekend service	Thank you so much for visiting us this weekend [First Name]! I just wanted to thank you for joining us and let you know we are praying for you!	Just wanted to let you know [First Name][Last Name] just entered the guest follow-up process. Send them a handwritten note welcoming them to church!
On the Friday before the next weekend service	Hi [First Name]! I hope you had a great week so far! We have been praying for you, and we hope to see you at church this weekend, too!	
A few weeks later if they have not shown up again	Hi [First Name]. It's been a couple of weeks since your first visit! Can we pray for you? Would you like more information on getting connected?	

Pro tip: Results consistently show that guest follow-up is most impactful when the Pastor makes the call to action from the pulpit during the sermon. One example is to ask all guests to text 'WELCOME' to a number — the keyword and number being shown on a big screen or large poster.

During the Week (Regular/Ongoing)

A text message came and invaded your space...but it asked for nothing. It was a no sell. Instead, it was a Spirit-influenced, prayerful, short note of encouragement. Now that's powerful!

In fact, it's probably the #1 thing that Pastors can do to get their flocks more plugged in. And when people are plugged in, they show up to church more, make an extra effort for their church, and donate more resources to church causes. In addition to encouragement, you can include a really short call to action for weekly meetings or weekend sermons.

How much "charisma" you put into your texts needs to match your personality and your church. These are just examples.

	Guests	Church
Uplifting	[name], Although we've just met, I want you to know brother/sister that I believe in you and I pray God's blessings over you to be strong and full of love, grace and truth!! You are a Man/Woman of God!!! Believe it and confess it!! -Pr Mark	[name], I want you to know brother/sister that I believe in you and I pray God's blessings over you to be strong and full of love, grace and truth!! You are a Man/Woman of God!!! Believe it and confess it!! -Pr Mark
Uplift + reminder	[name], You are the Child of a loving God. Feel blessed and uplifted now and always. Loved meeting you at church last weekend. Hope to see you this Saturday/Sunday. -Pr Mark	[name], You are the Child of a loving God. Feel blessed and uplifted now and always. Just wanted to remind you of the Wednesday Bible study at 8 pm. Hope to see you there. -Pr Mark

Pro tip: Use the voice broadcasting feature to send the same type of message if you think that's a better way. Many Pastors do this. Hearing a voice might resonate more with some of your congregation.

Other Uses

Again, depending on the setup and staff at your church, you as a Pastor may be involved in some or all of the following duties. We invite you to pick and choose what suits you. What doesn't, we suggest passing on to the relevant staff members(s) or ministry leaders. The text swipe copies are below each suggestion.

- **Encourage your ministry leaders / volunteers:** Some people say that face to face is the best way, and we don't disagree. We're offering a 'next best': texting a personalized message—never a group message—to your ministry leaders, staff and volunteers. Sending timely thanks to your team after an event or when you sense moral is low can be the pick-me-up that your team needs to make it through a challenging campaign or just a tough week.

Staff / Leaders / Volunteers

Encouragement

Hello, [name]. This is Pr. Mark. Thank you for all you do week to week at our church. I don't take your efforts for granted. You serve others each week and know I am praying for you and your family. Take time to recharge. Have a blessed week.

Encouragement (w/ask)

Hello, [name]. Thank you for all you do week to week at our church. I don't take your efforts for granted. You serve others but what about yourself? Is there any way I can serve you [and your family], including prayer? Just let me know. -Pr. Mark

- **National crisis address:** Hoping you never need this section but in case you do...this is for a national or local crisis. First, you want to encourage people. Next, you want to point them to relevant resources and/or inform them about anything the church is doing. Your message should be direct and include some specifics—no fluff. You can also include a FB, YouTube, website article, etc. link. We do have another guide that deals with using text before, during and after a Hurricane. Check out our website for more details.

	Everyone
Crisis: Msg template #1	Good morning/afternoon/evening [name]. It is with a heavy heart that we have heard about [event]. Please be reminded that “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.” —Psalm 46:1-3. Blessings, -Pr. Mark
Crisis: Msg template #2	Good morning/afternoon/evening [name]. As I am sure you have heard, [event]. Please be reminded that “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?” —Psalm 27:1. We are also reminded, “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” —Galatians 6:2. To that end, the church will be [holding a special prayer evening on (day) at (time) / collecting donations—more info here (link) / etc.]. Blessings, -Pr. Mark

Pro tip: Times of crisis messages work best when they come from a Pastor.

- **Shut-ins:** The PastorsLine app also offers calling. Most current shut-ins may or may not be texting. It could depend on who they are such as more senior church members. It could also be because in their situations, texting feels very impersonal. Also, there are some weeks during which pastors just can't make it out to all the shut-ins. So, using voice broadcasts or 1-to-1 calling might be a great way to contact them. A voice message tends to feel more personal, especially if it comes from your pastor. If you have a large group, you can send a voice broadcast to initiate that dialogue. Then, you, your elders or your shut-in team can follow up with a personal visit when possible.

	Person Shut in (voice message)	Prayer Warriors (text)
Shut-ins	Just wanted to reach out and see how it's going. Is there anything our church can do to ease your body, mind or heart? We are here for you now and always. Remembering you in our prayers, -Pr. Mark	Hey Prayer Warrior [name], Please include these shut-ins during your prayers [link]. "And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up."-James 5:15. -Pr. Mark

Pro tips:

Change your voice broadcasts weekly, so that those shut-in for longer hear different messages.

Send personalized texts to your prayer warriors with the name of shut-ins they should include in their devotions.

- **Deaths:** We have several Pastors who use the voice feature to announce deaths in the church. Some do text. Same with hospital visits.

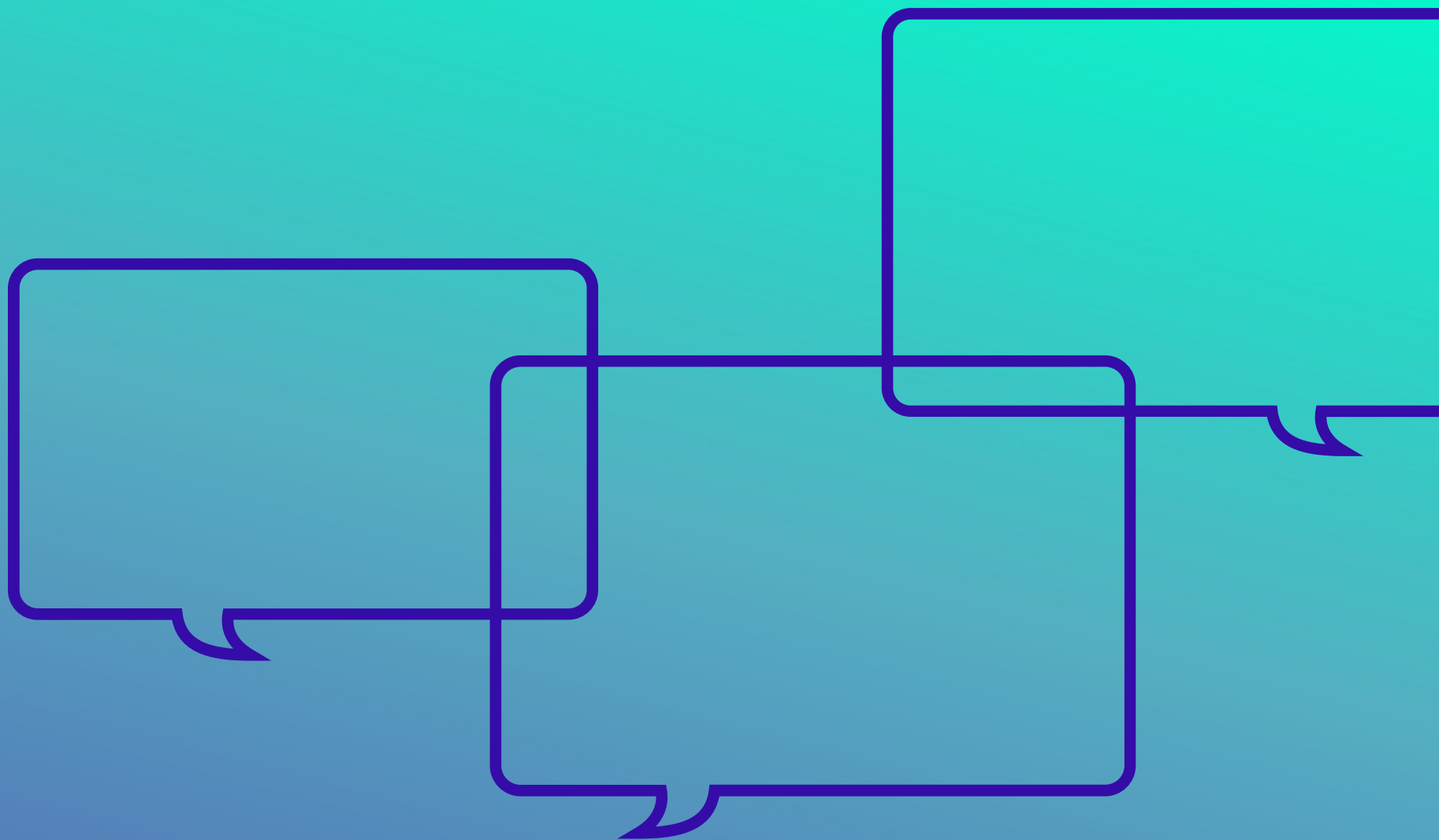
	Everyone
Deaths (voice message)	Good morning/afternoon/evening [name]. Pastor Mark here. We prayerfully announce the passing of [name]. Yes, it's natural to grieve, but please be reminded that "what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal". —2 Corinthians 4:18. Funeral details [link] / We will let you know about funeral details.
Hospital visits (voice message)	Hi [name]. Pastor Mark speaking. Unfortunately, [name] is in the hospital. Please include him/her in your prayers. If you feel the call, you can visit [name]. Here are the details [link].

- **Communication:** Many churches have a church communications director but in smaller churches, churches with struggling communication systems and church plants, the Pastor might also wear other ministry hats. If that sounds like you, check out our other guides for more [help](#). For all Pastors, sending announcements about special events or summarizing the top things for that week are nice ways to continue the conversation and strengthen your relationship with your congregation.

	Everyone
Communication: Special event	Hey [name]. In just # days, our [Health Fair / Young People's Concert / event name] will be here. I hope you [and your family] are planning to attend. Check out [link] for the latest info. Blessings, -Pr. Mark
Communication: Weekly roundup	Hi [name]. Did you know that this week our church [baptized 3 infants and 2 adults / opened a new Bible study group / had a church bake sale and raised \$ for our health clinic / etc.]? Glory to God! -Pr. Mark

No matter the size of your church and staff, here are a few PRO TEXTING TIPS for all Pastors:

- Use a local, non-spammy, 10 digit number (longcode) and not a shortcode when communicating. Longcodes feel more human, are in a familiar format and are cheaper overall. But two even bigger reasons are a 'dictionary-full' number of keywords (using a local number means that keywords will always be unique to your church) and control over how those keywords are being used (your number and keywords cannot be used by others such as bars or other ministries).
- Each Pastor should have a unique phone number and some eyes on the responses. It's ok to have an assistant who helps, perhaps even sending out texts on your behalf, but you should see at least a few of the responses each week. It's time well spent—you not only glean so much about the health of your church and their interest levels, but congregations tend to respond better when they know that their Pastor is taking a personal interest in what they have to say.
- Using or not using a signature varies. *New group?* Use in the body, something like: "Hi [first name]. Pr. Mark here. Just wanted...". *You've texted them before?* We find that adding a "- Pr. Mark" at the end of the text works well for most Pastors.
- Avoid becoming overwhelmed with personal requests from parishioners. Be direct and clear from the beginning about ground rules, including scope and office hours. Respond but point in the right direction if not related to Pastoral care. For example: a church member who has recently lost her job contacts you with a prayer request. Text back your sympathy and prayers, but point her towards the person or ministry which can help her further with more organized prayer, counselling, etc.



Overall...

It's powerful when churches text like if Jesus would. Jesus went to where the people were. He spoke their language. Today, the language of digital communication is text.

Texting platforms give you more natural ways to tend to your flock. Data capture allows personalization to reduce the spammy feel of the messages. Autoresponders (a personalized series of connect texts which can be set up to work 'on demand' or according to a calendar) mean that you can keep in touch at the same time you are simultaneously doing something else — multitasking at a high level.

We've peaked your interest, right?

If you are not already using texting (or want to see how PastorsLine compares with the app you currently have), use the invite code **PASTORS** to get a free 30-day trial with 500 additional credits.

Our standard free trial comes with 500 credits, so you will have 1000 credits to use. No CC required.

SIGN UP

Pastorsline.com/register



Zeke Vas

Pastor

The text message Bible study invites are working great. We saw a huge increase from 5-6 to 10-12 and the numbers stayed consistent.



Wyatt Allen

Evangelist, End Time Hope

When we finished our evangelistic event in Houston, 70% of those who were baptized, communicated with me through PastorsLine... it had a big influence.



Paolo Esposito

Pastor of RCF Church

I have been most excited when I see my church members telling their very own unchurched friends to text "PRAY" to our PastorsLine number and have them join our prayer sessions.