



# THE PRAYER CLOSET

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## Praying For Your Pastor

It is the duty and privilege of all believers to pray for their pastors. God demands and expects that believers will pray for their pastors. It is true that pastors need to pray. The blessing and power of a pastor's preaching and ministry will be determined by his prayer life. No man will ever go beyond the depth and intensity of his prayer life. Yet, at the same time, the believers must pray for their pastors. Great preachers and great pastors are men who have believers praying for them on a continual basis.

The apostle Paul asked for the prayers of believers. If the apostle Paul desired and asked for the prayers of other believers, how much more should believers pray for their pastors? Paul knew the value of having believers pray for him and his ministry. In his letters, Paul requests five times for believers to pray for him. It must be remembered that Paul is asking for the prayers of believers. Yet, it needs to be pointed out that the Holy Spirit was inspiring Paul to write these requests. Paul's requests are actually God's demands for all believers to pray for their leaders. The five times that Paul requests prayer for himself and his ministry are:

**1 Thessalonians 5:25:** "Brethren, pray for us."

**Romans 15:30:** "Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me."

**Philippians 1:19:** "For I know that this will turn out for my salvation through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ."

**Philemon 22:** "But, meanwhile, also prepare a guest room for me, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be granted to you."

**2 Corinthians 1:11:** "You also helping together in prayer for us, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the gift granted to us through many."

From these verses, it is apparent that God wants believers to pray for their pastors. Pastors are in desperate need of prayer.

The main reason that you as a believer should pray for your pastor is because God demands it. To fail to pray for your pastor is disobedience to God. It is a sin. A pastor is a gift of God to the church. The head of the church, Jesus Christ, has placed that pastor in that church (**Ephesians 4:11-12; Revelation 2:2**). As with all of God's gifts, there is a responsibility to be a good steward of what God gives. To fail to support and pray for the pastor is to despise the gift that Christ has given to the church. It is a failure to be a good steward of God's gift. This is a sin in the sight of God.

A second reason that you as a believer should pray for your pastor is because pastors have more responsibility and accountability. All people are responsible and accountable to God. Yet, pastors bear the burden of a greater responsibility and accountability. Pastors will face a more strict judgment than others will.

## HAVING TROUBLE WITH PRAYER?

As you read this newsletter, it is my hope and prayer that you are stirred and motivated to pray and spend time with God. The goal of this newsletter is to lead people into deeper fellowship with God by helping people to pray more effectively and consistently. Yet, it is necessary that I remind you of two basic truths concerning prayer.

**First, the only people who can pray and have fellowship with God are those who have a personal relationship to God through Jesus Christ.** The privilege of prayer belongs only to those who have surrendered their lives to Jesus Christ by faith and repentance. God becomes your Father only when you turn from your sin and to Christ in true faith (**Galatians 3:26**)! It is impossible to know God or pray to God unless you have turned from your sin and surrendered to the Lord Jesus Christ in true faith (**John 1:18; 5:37-38; 14-6, 10-11, 24**).

If you have never done this, your prayers are dead and useless. You must acknowledge your sin to God (**Exodus 20:1-20; Romans 3:9-20, 23**). You have failed to do what God commands and you have done what God forbids. Therefore, you are guilty, condemned, and headed to an eternity in hell. Yet, God has sent His son, Jesus Christ, to save sinners (**John 1:29; 3:16-19; Acts 4:12**). You must turn from your sinful, selfish lifestyle to Jesus Christ, trusting Him as your Savior and surrendering to Him as your Lord and Master (**Luke 13:1-3; Romans 10:9-10**). The problem in your prayer life may be that you have never come to know God in a personal relationship. It is only when you know God through Jesus Christ that you can truly pray and have fellowship with God.

**Second, you must be pursuing a holy life to have a powerful prayer life.** You may be thinking, "I know I am a Christian. Yet, my prayers seem so lifeless and dead." When teaching how to pray, the Lord Jesus declares to pray to your Father "who is in heaven." The Lord Jesus Christ is emphasizing the fact that your Father is a holy and sovereign God. Those who enter into His presence must be dealing with the sin in their lives. You cannot be complacent with wind and expect to have power in prayer. You cannot go for days without confessing personal sin and expect God to honor and answer your prayers.

The Bible says in Psalm 66:18, "**If I regard iniquity (sin) in my heart, the Lord will not hear.**" You cannot harbor or cherish sin in your life and at the same time expect to have power in prayer. **START READING PSALM 15 ON A DAILY BASIS!! BE DILIGENT TO CONFESS YOUR SINS DAILY!** Ask God to reveal your sin to you. Confess that sin and forsake it (**1 John 1:9**).

The Bible says in **James 3:1**, "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a *stricter judgment* (emphasis mine)." There is a standard for "teachers" or pastors and for all others. **There is a divine double standard!** In other words, pastors bear a greater responsibility and accountability before God than all others. For this reason, pastors need the believers of a church to pray continually and intensely for them. This means that you need to continually pray for you pastor; he has to live up to a stricter standard and faces a more severe and searching judgment before the judgment seat of Christ.

A third reason that you need to pray for your pastor is that he is a greater target for the devil. The Bible states in **1 Peter 5:8**, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." The devil is the fierce enemy of the church. Nothing would delight him more than to see the failure or downfall of a pastor.

All believers are targets of the devil. Yet, the devil is more specific, intentional, and persistent when it comes to pastors. He actively works to hinder and destroy pastors. The principle that needs to be remembered is this: the higher up you go on the ladder of Christian leadership, the higher you go on the devil's hit list. The devil would rather destroy a pastor than he would anyone else. And, he will throw all the power of hell behind this wicked and hateful purpose.

Another reason that you need to pray for your pastor is because he is more vulnerable to temptation. Since he is a greater target for the devil, this means that the temptations the devil throws at him will be much more intense and frequent. The devil and demons will attempt to exploit the weaknesses and sin problems of a pastor. Your pastor needs the protection from this. You can provide this protection for him by continually interceding for him.

You need to pray for your pastor because of the influence that he has on others. A pastor has wide influence on people, whether it is direct or indirect. If he falls, it will have a devastating effect on many people. When a pastor falls, it has a ripple effect. His fall devastates those who are the closest to him to those who only had an acquaintance with him. It will also give the enemies of Christ and His church an opportunity to blaspheme Christ, ridicule His church, and question the Word of God.

At the same time, a pastor can have a powerful impact on the lives of numerous people. His preaching and ministering can significantly impact those who are the closest to him and those who only have an acquaintance with him. This will be due primarily to the prayers of the believers whom he leads. The influence of your pastor will be primarily determined by how intensely and specifically you pray for him.

Next, you need to pray for your pastor because of his visibility. The pastor is always in the eyes of the congregation and the people in the community. For this reason, he is often the target of criticism and gossip. The pastor is observed carefully and his life and ministry are no secret to anyone. This places a heavy burden on pastors. They need supernatural help to deal with this. Your prayers open the way for them to receive the help that they need to deal with this.

A final reason that you need to pray for your pastor is because your prayers will determine the effectiveness of his ministry. E. M. Bounds wrote, "**A praying church creates a spiritual atmosphere most favorable to preaching.**" A church that continually and intensely prays for its pastor will have a powerful and effective pastor. Again, E. M. Bounds writes, "**Prayer makes preaching strong, gives it unction, and makes it stick.**" Many times a congregation wants to complain about its pastor. It is hypocrisy to complain about a pastor if you never pray for him. A church that does not pray for its pastor should not expect a powerful and effective ministry from its pastor. A pastor is nothing and can do nothing without the prayers of the believers of the church. As Vance Havner once wrote, "**Many churches think they need a new pastor when all they need to do is pray for the one they have!**" It is time that believers hear and take to heart the words of Gardiner Spring in his "A Plea To Pray For Pastors":

If a people are looking for rich sermons from their minister, their prayers must supply him with the needed material. If they expect powerful and successful sermons, their prayers

must make him a blessing to the souls of men! . . . It is in their own closets that the people of God most effectively challenge their beloved ministers to take heed to the ministry they have received from the Lord Jesus . . . It is at a fearful expense that ministers are ever allowed to enter the pulpit without being preceded, accompanied, and followed by the earnest prayers of the churches. **It is no marvel that the pulpit is so powerless, and ministers so often disheartened when there are so few to hold up their hands. The consequences of neglecting this duty is seen and felt in the everlasting perdition of men; while the consequences of regarding it would be the ingathering of multitudes into the kingdom of God, and new glories to the Lamb that was slain** (emphasis mine).

God expects pastors to take prayerful interest in the spiritual walk and the specific needs and problems of many. Pastors carry the prayer burden for every person in his congregation. Yet, who prays for the pastor's spiritual walk? Who prays for the pastor's needs and problems. No matter how well you pay your pastor, praise him, or work for him, it is only through earnest, strategic prayer that you can ever really help him be an effective minister in the hands of an Almighty God.

I want to challenge you to pray for your pastor. And I want to challenge you to intercede for other pastors. This is God's demand of you. This will bring the blessing and power of God on their ministry and preaching. The following prayer list is offered to help you in your praying. These requests are based on the Word of God. Along with these, you need to pray about the specific needs that your pastor and other pastors have. This prayer list is simply a guideline to help you.

### HIS RELATIONSHIP TO GOD

Please pray that your pastor will be:

- (1) **A man after God's own heart:** "Father, I ask you to make my pastor a man after Your own heart which will do all Your will (Acts 13:22; 1 Samuel 16:7)";
- (2) **A man of the Word of God:** "Father, cause my pastor to love the Word with all his heart and enable him to memorize and meditate on it all the day (Psalm 119:97)";
- (3) **Guided by God in all that he does:** "O Lord, I plead that You will guide my pastor in all that he says and does (Psalm 37:23)";
- (4) **Growing and maturing in his prayer life:** "God, I ask that you would make my pastor a mighty man of prayer (Mark 1:35)";
- (5) **Filled with the Holy Spirit:** "Father, I ask you to constantly control and empower my pastor for his own Christian life and the task that you have given him (Ephesians 5:18)";
- (6) **Manifesting the fruit of the Spirit:** "Lord, I ask that the fruit of the Holy Spirit will be powerfully and clearly displayed in my pastor's life (Galatians 5:22-23)";
- (7) **Truly humble:** "Father, I ask that my pastor will be humble, depending totally on You and remaining useable by You (1 Peter 5:5-6)";

(8) **Growing in godliness and holiness:** “God, I plead that You would make my pastor into a holy and godly man that You can use in a dynamic way (1 Timothy 4:7, 6:11; Hebrews 12:14)”;

(9) **Diligent in resisting temptation:** “Father, enable my pastor to overcome temptation and give him a hatred of sin in any form (1 Corinthians 10:13)”;

(10) **Doctrinally sound:** “God, teach my pastor the truth of the Word of God by the power of the Holy Spirit so that he can explain, proclaim, and defend the Word of God (1 Timothy 4:15; 2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Timothy 4:15-16)”;

(11) **Growing in his leadership skills:** “Lord God, enable my pastor to fulfill the calling that You have given to him (1 Timothy 3:1-7; 1 Timothy 3:15; 1 Peter 5:1-4)”;

(12) **A genuine servant:** “Father, I plead that you would give my pastor a servant’s heart and enable him to compassionately minister to this congregation and the lost in this community (Philippians 2:5)”;

### HIS PREACHING

(1) **That he would be a Christ-centered and Christ exalting preacher-**1 Corinthians 2:1-4;

(2) **That he would remember that God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the angels are listening to His preaching-**2 Timothy 4:1;

(3) **That he would preach all of the Word of God-**Acts 20:20-21, 27; 2 Timothy 4:2;

(4) **That he would preach in the power of the Holy Spirit-**Acts 4:8-12;

(5) **That he would preach the Word of God boldly and fearlessly-**2 Timothy 4:1-2;

(6) **That he would not be afraid of men but faithful to preach the Word of God-**Proverbs

(7) **That he would have the time and be disciplined to study the Word of God-**1 Timothy 4:15;

(8) **That the Word of God would be central and absolute in his preaching and ministry-**2 Timothy 3:15-16;

(9) **That his preaching would be used by God to save the lost, mature the believers, and build up the church-**2 Timothy 4:5 (“do the work of an evangelist”); Ephesians 4:11-16;

(10) **That he would be faithful to preach the truth in spite of opposition or indifference-**1 Timothy 6:12, 20-21; 2 Timothy 3:13-14, 4:2-4;

### HIS MINISTRY

(1) **That he would have a fruitful ministry-**John 15:16; Colossians 1:28;

(2) **That he would be devoted to prayer and the Word-**Acts 6:4;

- (3) That he would intercede and instruct the congregation-1 Samuel 12:23; Romans 1:9-10;
- (4) That he would equip the saints for service and discipleship-Ephesians 4:11-12; 2 Timothy 2:2;
- (5) That he would be protected from Satan and all his attacks-2 Thessalonians 3:1-3;
- (6) That he would be protected from and strengthened during the attacks of unregenerate church members-2 Timothy 4:15-18; 2 Corinthians 11:26 (“false brethren”);
- (7) That God would give him insight and direction into the solutions for the problems of the church-1 Kings 3:7-9;
- (8) That God would give him wisdom and discernment in counseling those who come to him for help or advice-Proverbs 2:6;
- (9) That he will have a strong, close, and harmonious relationship with those in leadership in the church-Psalm 133:1; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; Amos 3:3;
- (10) That he will be able to respond to criticism and opposition in a gracious, Christlike way combined with a determination to be faithful to God and His Word-Matthew 5:10-12, 43-48, 10:28; Romans 12:14, 17-21;

#### **HIS RELATIONSHIP TO THE CHURCH**

- (1) Pray that the congregation will be stirred by the Spirit of God to pray for your pastor-1 Thessalonians 5:25;
- (2) Pray that the congregation will have a growing love and hunger for the Word of God-Psalm 119:97;
- (3) Pray that the deacons and the congregation will be committed to the pastor’s ministry and leadership-Hebrews 13:17;
- (4) Pray that the congregation will respect and love the pastor-1 Thessalonians 5:12-13;
- (5) Pray that God would silence any rumors, gossip, or slander that is being spread about the pastor-Proverbs 15:28, 20:19, 21:28;

#### **HIS RELATIONSHIP TO HIS FAMILY**

- (1) Pray that the pastor’s family would be loving, unselfish, respectful, and understanding to each other-Ephesians 5:25; 1 Peter 3:7; Ephesians 5:33; Ephesians 6:1-2, 4;
- (2) Pray that God would strengthen and bless your pastor’s marriage and family life-Proverbs 5:15-20;
- (3) Pray that the pastor’s family would be a source of joy and blessing to one another-Proverbs 23:24, 31:28, 30;