



THE PRAYER CLOSET

*Transforming Lives Through Intercessory
Prayer And Fasting*

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ISSUE 2

PRAYING FOR YOUR PASTOR'S WIFE

Pastors have a difficult and demanding job. They are responsible to God for an entire congregation. They visit church members in hospitals and in homes. They preach two to three times a week. They perform weddings and funerals. They counsel those who are in need of help. They attend numerous meetings. The list of the responsibilities of a pastor could go on and on. They do have numerous tasks and responsibilities. Yet, what about pastors' wives?

It is true that a pastor has a difficult and demanding job. However, his wife also has a difficult and demanding job. Just as he has many tasks and responsibilities, so does his wife. She is a wife to the pastor of the church. She is the mother

of children. Often, she works outside of the home to help supplement the income. She is a Christian. She is a church member. She is often expected to serve actively in the church. There is a common assumption that the pastor's wife should do what nobody else can be found to do. She is the relative of parents and siblings. She has family that she needs to keep up with and share in their lives. A pastor's wife has the normal pressures of life coupled with the responsibility of ministry. This presents a constant challenge for her to cope with on a regular basis.

The pastor's wife is often forgotten and taken for granted. The pastor is the one who often receives the attention, the praise, and the thanks for ministry. Yet, the pastor's wife is often overlooked in this matter. And, when there are problems in church, the pastor's wife has to suffer in silence. It is difficult on the pastor. Yet, it is often more difficult for the wife who has a seemingly thankless task along with coping with the difficulties in the church.

For this reason, churches need to pray for the pastor's wife. In fact, the church needs to cover the wife of every staff member. It is not enough to intercede for and cover the pastor. Our intercession needs to extend to the wife. She is in need of the prayers of believers just as much as is her husband, the pastor.

ISSUE 2 - HIGHLIGHTS

PRAYING FOR YOUR PASTOR'S WIFE

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Why Should You Pray For Your Pastor's Wife?

There are some basic reasons why you should pray for your pastor's wife. These same reasons extend to the wives of other staff members. *The first reason that you need to pray for your pastor's wife is because she is a Christian and your sister in the family of God.* It needs to be remembered that the pastor's wife is first and foremost a Christian. She is an equal member of the family of God. As a fellow Christian and a member of the family of God, your pastor's wife needs your encouragement and help. There are many ways that you can do this. You need to minister to her in a variety of ways. Yet, the greatest thing that you can do for her is to intercede for her. She is a sister in Christ and should be prayed for as other believers. The Word of God states in **1 Corinthians 14:26**, "And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it." As a member of the body of Christ, the pastor's wife needs to be ministered to and prayed for by the other believers. This is your responsibility before God.

Another reason that you should pray for your pastor's wife is because his wife is going to be a help or a hindrance to his ministry. A wife can make or break a man's ministry. Her relationship to God and to her husband is going to have an impact on his ministry. You need to pray that God will bless the pastor's wife so that she can encourage and strengthen her husband, the pastor. When she is right with the Lord and pursuing a relationship with Him, she can have a powerful and positive impact on the effectiveness of her husband's ministry. If things are not right at home, a man's ministry is going to be hindered. A godly pastor's wife who is growing in the Lord can increase the effectiveness of her husband's ministry. As Vance Havner once said, "Some women have made fools out of men and some women have made men out of fools." You need to intercede for her so that she can encourage and strengthen her husband.

Believers should pray for their pastor's wife because of the spiritual warfare that she is going to face. The leaders of a church are going to face

attacks of Satan. Yet, this does not make the wives or their children immune from these attacks. The wife is going to face the temptations and attacks of Satan just as the husband will. Satan is a hateful and spiteful being. He will attack anyone to get a stronghold in order to destroy a ministry and a family. You need to pray for your pastor's wife so that she will be covered from the attacks of the enemy. She needs a continual prayer covering from the believers of the church. When the Word of God declares that Satan is a "roaring lion, seeking, whom he may devour," pastor's wives are a target also (**1 Peter 5:8-9**). If the enemy cannot hinder a pastor, he will then attack the family. The wife is particularly vulnerable in this situation and needs the prayers of believers.

Your pastor's wife needs your prayers because not only does she have to cope with the demand of everyday life, she also has to cope with the demands of the ministry. A pastor's wife is in one sense like all other women. She has the many responsibilities that other women have. She is like all other mothers, ~~dealing with the same~~ responsibilities and problems. This in and of itself puts a strain on a woman. Yet, unlike other women and mothers, she has the demands of the ministry placed on her. Not only does she have to deal with the everyday problems and struggles of life; she also has to cope with the problems and struggles that come with being involved in ministry. She shares the burden of ministry with her husband. She rejoices with him and cries with him. By saying these things, I am not trying to exalt pastor's wives over other women and/or other mothers. Yet, I am saying that there is a great deal of pressure to deal with as the wife of a pastor and /or church leader. Being involved in ministry is not something that you work at from eight to five and then walk away from it until the next day. It is a twenty-four hour a day responsibility. And this is added to the pressures of everyday life. For this reason, believers need to intercede for her so that she can cope with the pressure.

Another reason that you should pray for your pastor's wife is because of the loneliness that she has to endure. A pastor's wife experiences a lot of lonely times. She has to share her husband with an entire congregation. There are numerous pastors that have a job outside of the responsibilities of the

pastorate. This often increases the pressure on his wife. She has to be home alone many times. She has to do things by herself that other couples often do together. She often has more of the responsibility of raising the children in this situation. In many cases, her family is a long-distance from her. There are times when she needs her husband and he is not available. This can put a strain on her and on her relationship to him. A pastor's wife is a human being also. She gets lonely and frustrated. Because of this, your pastor's wife needs your prayers.

The various expectations of a pastor's wife should cause you to cover her in prayer. People in churches have a variety of expectations concerning their pastor. It seems that people have their own ideas of what a pastor should be and what a pastor should do. The same is true of pastors' wives. A pastor's wife is often judged by the fickle standards of people. If she does not behave in a particular way or if she does not do exactly as people feel that she should, she is the subject of gossip and backbiting. It is determined that she is not a "very good pastor's wife." Attempting to live with the stereotypes and expectations of people can be a burden to a pastor's wife. She needs wisdom and grace to know how to deal with these things. She can receive these things through your praying.

A final reason why you should pray for your pastor's wife is because she has sins and weaknesses. A pastor's wife is like all other believers. She has sins and weakness that plague her. Sometimes these are apparent; sometimes they are not. Yet, these should drive believers to pray for her, asking God to help her grow in holiness. You need to plead that God will enable her to grow to maturity and to strengthen the weaknesses that she has. Too often people want to criticize and gossip about what they perceive are the sins or the weaknesses of a pastor's wife. Rather, than gossiping and criticizing, believers should be driven to pray that God would help her and enable her to overcome these things. It is much better and more productive to pray than to criticize. God is pleased when we pray rather than giving into petty criticism and gossip. He will also honor this commitment by blessing the pastor's wife. You can truly make a difference in the life of your pastor's wife by praying to the Father for her. Your prayers can

enable her to grow into the Christian and the pastor's wife that God desires her to be. Your prayers on her behalf can be a significant investment in her, in your church, in your pastor, and in the advancement of the kingdom of God. It is a worthy task to intercede for your pastor's wife.

Ways That You Can Pray For Your Pastor's Wife

The following are some suggested prayer requests that you can use to intercede for your pastor's wife. You can use these or develop your own requests from this material. You also need to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leadership. He may give you specific insights on how to pray for her. At the same time, be aware of what is going on with your pastor's wife. By doing this, you can know how to pray more specifically and intensely for her.

Her Relationship to God

- (1) Pray that she will have a growing and intimate relationship with God (**Psalm 42:1-2; 63:1**). Plead that your pastor's wife would have a hunger for God. Pray that she will love Him more fully and will be growing in her intimacy with Him.
- (2) Ask God to enable her to have the time and discipline to spend time with Him (**Matthew 6:6; Colossians 4:2**). In order to have a growing and intimate relationship with God, she needs to spend time alone with God. Pray that God would give her the discipline to do this and work in such a way that she would have these opportunities. This is especially true if your pastor's wife works outside the home. In this case, she will have many demands and time constraints on her. Pray that God would enable her to find the time to spend with God and that this time will be quality time.
- (3) Plead that God would enable your pastor's wife to grow in her knowledge of the Word of God (**1 Peter 2:2; 2 Timothy 3:16-17**). The pastor's wife is going to deal with people on a regular basis that are in need of her advice and

counseling. As a pastor's wife, people are going to turn to her for answers, especially women in a congregation. She needs to have a deep understanding of the Word of God in order to give sound, biblical answers. Pray that she will grow in her understanding of the Word so that she can mature as a Christian and then help others mature in the faith and find the answers that they need.

- (4) Pray that your pastor's wife would be diligent to confess and repent of her sins (**Proverbs 28:13; 1 John 1:9**). In order for her to grow in holiness, your pastor's wife must confess and repent of her personal sins. Ask the Holy Spirit to give her an awareness of those things that are not right in her life and then for the grace and the strength to root those things out.
- (5) Pray that your pastor's wife will be filled with the Holy Spirit (**Ephesians 5:18**). Just like all other believers, your pastor's wife needs the power of the Holy Spirit to live the Christian life and to minister to others. Pray that she will learn to depend on the Holy Spirit so that she can live the Christian life and help others.
- (6) Ask that the pastor's wife would be a personal witness for the Lord Jesus Christ (**Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:19-20**). Your pastor's wife needs to be a witness of the Lord Jesus Christ both with her words and with her actions. Pray that God would mold her and shape her into the personal witness that Jesus Christ wants her to be.
- (7) Pray that she will know that her first priority is to please God above all others (**1 Corinthians 10:31**).

Her Relationship to the Church

- (1) Plead that your pastor's wife will have a servant's heart (**Matthew 20:28**). Pray that she will grow more and more like Jesus Christ, having a heart to serve others. Call on God to give her opportunities to minister to the

members of the church and to those who are outside of the church. Ask God to give her wisdom how to serve others. Plead that she would grow in her compassion for others.

- (2) Pray that the members of the church will have a deep, sacrificial love for the pastor's wife (**1 John 3:11; 4:7**). The congregation needs to have a heart for the pastor's wife—for her life, her growth, and her needs. Pray that God would move on the hearts of the people. Pray that they will develop a love that will move them to care for and minister to the pastor's wife. Ask God to make the believers sensitive to her needs and how they can minister to her.
- (3) Ask God to give the pastor's wife a deep, sacrificial love for the people (**1 John 3:11; 4:7**). Pray that the pastor's life will have a deep and sacrificial love for the congregation. God is pleased when there is mutual love and sacrifice between believers. This is true of the pastor's wife and a congregation. Pray that this mutual love and sacrifice will become a reality.
- (4) Plead that God would use your pastor's wife in a significant way in the church (**1 Corinthians 12:7**). Ask God to enable your pastor's wife to serve in the body and to make a difference. She has particular spiritual gifts and talents that God can use. Pray that she will have the wisdom and the strength to do what God is calling her to do in the body. Ask for God to give her wisdom to know what she is supposed to do in the body.
- (5) Call on God to give her wisdom in personal relationships (**Proverbs 2:9-11**). The pastor's wife is in a difficult position when it comes to friendships inside and outside of the church. Many times there is a question of who she can trust and depend on. Many pastor's wives have been wounded by the betrayal of those they felt could be counted on as a friend. Pray that God will give her wisdom and discernment concerning this issue.
- (6) Plead that your pastor's wife will be protected from loneliness (**Matthew 28:20; Hebrews 13:5-6**). Loneliness is a constant problem for

many pastor's wives. Pray that she will experience the presence and peace of God in her life and that these things will fill the void in her when times of loneliness come.

- (7) Ask God to raise up friends for your pastor's wife that can be trusted, can be depended on, and will pray for her (**Ecclesiastes 4:9-12**). You can minister to your pastor's wife by praying that God will raise up friends who can be trusted, depended on, and will intercede for her. Sometimes there are things that cannot be shared with those inside the church. Your pastor's wife will need someone that she can talk to and count on to listen to her. Pray for God to grant this valuable blessing in her life.
- (8) Pray that God would give her the grace and courage to cope with the struggles and difficulties associated with being involved in the ministry (**2 Corinthians 12:9-10**). As I stated earlier, there are numerous struggles and difficulties that have to be faced as a pastor's wife. The pressure and the demands will stress the godliest of Christian woman. It is only the strength and grace of God that can enable the pastor's wife to endure these things and to thrive in the midst of them. Pray that God will be pouring out His grace and strength on your pastor's wife. This is an enormous need in her life and you will be blessing her by pleading for God to grant these things to her.
- (9) Ask God to give her the wisdom and discernment to deal with difficult people (**Proverbs 18:19; Matthew 10:16**). Within every church, there are going to be people that are going to be a difficulty. They may be hard to deal with for a variety of reasons. Pray that the pastor's wife will have the wisdom and discernment to know how to deal with these types of individuals.

Her Relationship to Her Family

- (1) Pray that she would have a growing and intimate relationship with her husband (**Proverbs 5:15-18**). The pressure and demands of the ministry can be a hindrance to the intimacy of a pastor's relationship to his wife. Plead that God will strengthen their marriage and will produce a deep and powerful intimacy between the two of them. This is extremely important because this is an area where Satan will work to get a stronghold in the life of a pastor. Pray for God's protection of their marriage and that they will grow in their relationship to each other.
- (2) Plead that her husband will be sensitive to the fact that she has needs (**1 Peter 3:7**). The pastor spends most of his time ministering to and encouraging his congregation. There are times when he forgets that his wife has needs and that she needs to be ministered to and encouraged just like the other believers who make up the church. Pray that he will have a special sensitivity to her needs and a willingness to meet those needs. Ask God to remind your pastor that he is a husband and a father too.
- (3) Pray that the pastor will have a deep and passionate love for his wife (**Proverbs 5:19-20**). Again, the demands and pressures of ministry can strain the marriage relationship of the pastor and his wife or any staff member and his wife. In **Proverbs 5:19**, the writer declares that the husband should be "intoxicated" with his wife and her love. This speaks of a deep and passionate love for the wife. The first reason that you should pray this is so that their relationship would grow stronger and better. Yet, you should also pray this as a safeguard against adultery. **Proverbs 5:20** indicates that if he has a deep and passionate love for his wife, it will be a barrier against committing adultery against that wife. Plead that God would increase their love for the other and would strengthen their commitment to one another.

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- (4) Ask God to grant to both the pastor and his wife the wisdom and discernment that they need to raise their children (**Ephesians 6:4**). The stress and demands of the ministry also affect the children. Many times they are scrutinized more than other children are. Both the pastor and his wife need wisdom to know how to raise them and how to deal with the problems that occur because they are involved with ministry.
- (5) Pray that God would enable her to become the wife and mother that He wants her to be (**Proverbs 31:10-31**). The pastor's wife is a wife and a mother like other women. She will be accountable to God for how she uses these opportunities. Pray that God would help her to grow to what He wants her to be in these areas. Plead that she would have the power and strength to carry out her responsibilities. Ask God to give her the wisdom that she needs to be effective in these areas.
- (6) Pray that she would have strong relationships with extended family (**Proverbs 17:17, 18:24**). A pastor's wife is often separated by distance from her family and her husband's family. Even when this is not the case, the busyness of the pastorate often hinders them from spending a great deal of time with their families. Pray that God would give her healthy and strong relationships with her family in spite of the distance and the busyness of her life.

Praying For Your Child's Husband or Wife

Next to the decision to commit one's life to Jesus Christ, marriage is the most important commitment that a person can ever make. It will affect the rest of his or her life along with the lives of their family members. An unwise decision in this matter can bring pain and misery for everyone involved. Since only God knows who will make the best marriage partner for anyone, He should be consulted first and He should give the final answer.

A parent may feel helpless in the matter of who his or her child decides to marry. Yet, this is simply not true. Through prayer, you can have a significant impact on who your child marries. Every parent hopes that his or her child will marry a compatible and godly mate. Prayer is essential in guiding them in that direction.

Magnificent weddings do not make perfect marriages. Only God can do that. The Word of God says, "There are many plans in a man's heart, nevertheless the LORD's counsel—that will stand (**Proverbs 19:21**).” It is neither the advice of friends nor the admiration of people that causes a couple to have a strong, godly marriage. It is not bridal consultants and caterers who set the bride and groom on the right path. Consulting God and following His leading do that. It is only the prayer of parents and concerned people that cause a child to seek continually the will of God instead of following their own emotions.

The following are some suggested prayer requests that you can use to pray about your child's future mate. You can use these or you could develop your own from them. These requests can be used in a variety of ways. A parent can use them to intercede for the child's future or present mate. Grandparents can use these requests to pray for the present or future mate of their grandchildren. A concerned individual or youth minister can use them to pray for young people. A single person can use them to pray for their future mate. A single person can use them to seek God's guidance in this important matter. No matter how they are used, it is important to pray for the future mate of your child or the child of someone you love.

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Father, I pray that his/her mate would enter into a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ (**John 3:16; Acts 4:12**).

Father, I pray that You would protect him/her from the spirit of divorce, which is so common to this age (**Malachi 2:14-16**). No matter what age your child is, pray about this today. Divorce threatens everyone at some time or another. Stand against this and resist it from getting a grip in your child's life. If your child is already divorced, pray for all the brokenness to be healed and that there will be no more divorce in his or her future.

Lord, grant that he/she would hunger for You and seek to serve You with all his/her heart (**Psalm 42:1-2, 63:1, Matthew 12:23**).

Father, I pray that You would teach him/her the basics of spiritual warfare, how to flee temptation, how to take thoughts captive, and how to stand firm against the devil's schemes (**1 Peter 5:8-9; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5; James 4:7-8**).

Lord, I plead that You would teach him/her how to pray and would give him/her a heart for prayer (**Colossians 4:2; Luke 18:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:18**).

Father, enable him/her to remain a virgin until he/she is married. Guard him/her from immorality, "outercourse" (petting experiences), sexual abuse or harassment, and exposure to pornography. Grant him/her a desire for sexual purity. (**Colossians 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4; Ephesians 5:3**).

I ask that You would show him/her what You want him/her to do with his/her life. Make Your will known to him/her. Cause him/her to seek Your will for his/her life (**1 Corinthians 10:31; 1 Timothy 4:12**).

I pray that he/she would be committed to truth and would choose honesty in every situation even when tempted to lie in order to lessen the consequences or the punishment (**Ephesians 4:25**).

Father, I plead that You would teach him/her to be a good parent. Grant his/her parents' good parenting skills and if not provide him/her with good role models of parenting (**Psalm 68:5-6; Matthew 6**).

Lord, I pray that You would grant him/her a healthy, God-centered view of money and possessions. Help him/her have a proper attitude toward money in giving, working, and receiving. I ask that You would enable him/her to learn how to save, tithe, and budget money (**1 Timothy 6:6-11**).

Father, I ask that he/she would develop good communication skills. Enable him/her to speak only those things that are good and uplifting. Guard him/her from profanity, foul language, and angry responses (**Colossians 3:8; Ephesians 4:29**).

Lord, grant my child's mate deep and satisfying personal relationships that will prepare him/her for marriage but that will not compromise his/her purity. Teach him/her how to care and love for another person. Deliver him/her from selfishness and self-centeredness (**1 Thessalonians 4:3-8; Ephesians 5:22-33**).

I ask that he/she would put away all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking along with malice. I pray that he/she would grow in kindness toward others, would be tenderhearted and forgiving of others as God for Christ's sake has forgiven him/her (**Ephesians 4:31-32**).

Father, I pray that he/she would develop a servant's heart. I ask that he/she would be given a heart to serve others and not himself/herself (**Matthew 20:28**).

God, I ask that he/she will have a burning desire to share the gospel with others. Make him/her into a powerful witness of the Your Son, Jesus Christ. Give him/her a vision for the world and a heart to support missions (**Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8**).

Father, I ask that You would grant him/her the desire and commitment to be an active part of Your Son's church. I plead that he/she will know his/her spiritual gifts and will use them for Your glory and

for the building up of Your Son's church (**Hebrews 10:25; 1 Corinthians 12**).

Lord, I plead that You would deal with anything in his/her life that would hinder or be destructive to his/her marriage. Enable him/her to overcome sins or character weaknesses that might do damage to the marriage relationship and to the children (**Psalms 147:3, Galatians 5:22-23**).

Lord God, I pray that he/she will love You with all his/her heart, soul, mind, and strength. Cause him/her to worship and serve no other God but You. Never allow anything to become more important to him/her than You (**Matthew 22:37-38; Exodus 20:1-3; 1 John 5:21**).

Father, I plead that he/she will love others as himself/herself. Create within him/her a compassion and a concern for others (**Matthew 22:39**).

Your prayers can have a significant impact on the kind of person that your child marries. They can also bring changes in the person to whom your child is already married. It is not that you should pray for the perfect mate for your child. It is that you should pray for your child to marry someone who is becoming all God wants him or her to be.

Dealing With Distractions in Prayer

All believers struggle with being distracted in prayer. From veterans to beginners in prayer, believers have times when their minds wander and they lose focus. Even Jesus' disciples had a difficult time staying focused in prayer, "Then He came to the disciples and found them asleep, and said to Peter, 'What, could you not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak.'"

Have you ever been distracted when you prayed? Have you ever battled to stay focused when you prayed? If you have been distracted and lost focus, you are not alone. This is a common struggle for all believers. As Jesus said, our spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. Saints throughout the

ages have battled against wandering thoughts in prayer.

How can we overcome the flesh in prayer? The following are some suggestions on how to deal with distractions in prayer.

- (1) *You must learn to "shut the door"*. Jesus gave the following instructions to His disciples when He taught them how to pray, "But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut the door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly (**Matthew 6:6**)."

In order to pray Jesus states that you have to "shut the door". By this He means that you have to find a place where you can be alone with the Father. And it is more than simply shutting a door and barricading yourself in a room. You are to close the door on everything that would hinder or disturb you. You are to set your heart's attention on the Father. This is an act of the will. It is a decision to be quiet, to listen, and to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit and His presence. It is slowing down and enjoying His presence.

- (2) *You might want to consider establishing a "prayer closet"*. A "prayer closet" does not have to be a closet. It can simply be a space where you get alone and get with God. You need a place that is holy ground to you—a place where you meet regularly with the Lord. If at all possible, this needs to be a place where you are shut off from distractions and interruptions. Eugene Peterson's translation of **Matthew 6:6** in *The Message* reveals the importance of a place like this, "Here's what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won't be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense His grace."
- (3) *Read the Word of God before praying*. Reading the Word of God will provide you with the spiritual food that you need to grow. It is also the best preparation for talking with God. Through the Word of God, God speaks to us. Through prayer, we speak to Him. By reading

His Word before we pray, our hearts are prepared to respond in prayer to what He has already shown us. George Mueller, a great man of prayer, wrote that he would spend up to a half-hour suffering from wandering thoughts before he really began to pray. For a half-hour, he would battle wandering thoughts while attempting to pray. He then made a simple discovery that enabled him to overcome distractions in prayer. He writes, "I saw that the most important thing was to give myself to the reading of God's Word, and to meditation on it . . . Now prayer, in order to be continued for any length of time in any other than a formal manner, requires, generally speaking, a measure of strength or godly desire, and the season therefore when this exercise of soul can be most effectually performed is after the inner man has been nourished by meditation on the Word of God, where we find our Father speaking to us, to encourage us, to comfort us, to instruct us, to humble us, to reprove us . . . Thus there is far less to be feared from wandering of mind than if we give ourselves to prayer without having had time previously for meditation."

- (4) *Pray out loud.* A quick way of eliminating distractions is by praying out loud. The act of speaking forces you to articulate your thoughts, anxieties, and requests more clearly. Praying out loud also causes you to slow down. It has been said that the average person thinks at about 1,300 words per minute but can only speak about 50 words per minute. Speaking your prayers instead of thinking them allows you to address one issue at a time and can help you from having a flood of needs and requests that gets you distracted. Praying out loud can enable you to bring your needs and concerns to the throne of grace one by one.
- (5) *Pray the Word of God.* Praying the Word of God is an excellent way of overcoming distractions. Take verses of Scripture and pray them back to God. By doing this you are taking your mind off of yourself and fixing them on God and His will. Instead of scrambling for something to say, you can use the Word of God to focus your conversation on God. It will also

prevent you from rambling when words do not come easy.

- (6) *Develop a plan for prayer.* When you pray, it might be helpful to have a plan of how you are going to pray. By this I mean that you know what you are going to talk about with God. You might want to have a prayer list or a list of needs and concerns that you are going to bring before Him. Do not allow this to become an empty ritual. Prayer is more than simply going through a prayer list before God. You need to have times when you come into God's presence without a prayer list and follow the leadership of His Holy Spirit when you pray. Others often tease me about how I approach prayer. I have prayer lists. I have a Rolodex that I pray through regularly. I keep files on the people for whom I am interceding. These files contain notes on how I have prayed for the person and what changes have taken place. In short, I am highly organized. Yet, there are times when I push those materials aside. I enter into God's presence and simply pray, "Father, what is on Your heart today? Who do You want me to pray for today?" As God brings people and needs to my mind, I pray for them. What I am saying is that you need to have a balance. Don't allow yourself to get into an empty routine of simply calling out names and needs on a prayer list. Be open to the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Yet, at the same time, do have some idea of what you are going to talk with God about when you enter His presence. You do need some structure in your prayer life. By doing this, you can prevent wandering thoughts and nagging distractions.
- (7) *Use hymns or praise songs in your prayer times.* When your mind starts to wander a favorite hymn or praise song can draw your mind back to spiritual things. They can also settle your mind to pray if you are feeling anxious or worried. These things can help you set the tone for your prayers and enable you to stay focused in praying. There are a variety of ways to incorporate these into your prayer time. You could listen to tapes and CDs before or during your worship time. You could sing these to the

Lord. You might also consider using them as prayers. You would simply have to reword them to fit you and your situation. Not only can these be a rich source of devotional material; they can also be used to help you stay focused in prayer.

- (8) *You might consider writing your prayers out.* It is often easier to maintain our concentration if we are doing something physical such as writing. As with speaking your prayers out, writing them down slows you down and forces you to concentrate on one issue at a time. Writing your prayers down puts you in the position where you have to concentrate on what you are doing. You might want to consider doing this a couple of times a week. An additional benefit of writing your prayers down is rereading them later. You will have a unique written record of your struggles and of God's faithful responses.
- (9) *Pray while you walk or run.* One of the ways that I have found to help me concentrate in prayer is to pray while I am walking or running. The active nature of these things helps me concentrate when I pray. There are very few things that disturb me when I am doing these things. When you are walking or running, you might want to consider using that time to pray. The Word of God says that we are to be "redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (**Ephesians 5:16**). Praying while you are walking or running is a way of carrying out this biblical command.
- (10) *Pray with a prayer partner.* It is much easier to stay alert while praying with someone. You might want to consider praying with a prayer partner on a regular basis.

God has called you to pray. He is well able to redirect your time in pray. Ask God to give you the power to stay focused in prayer. Call on Him to give you wisdom to create ways to stay focused in prayer. Plead with Him to implement these into your prayer life. Your efforts in this matter will be well worth it and will be richly rewarded. Spending time with God without distractions and wandering

thoughts is the most delightful and joyous blessing that a child of God can enjoy this side of eternity.

Praying For Revival in the Pulpit

Leonard Ravenhill once wrote, "The wickedness in the pulpit leads to weakness in the pew." There is a desperate need for those who proclaim the Word and pastor the churches of this land to experience spiritual awakening. There are various factors that have created the weak and apathetic churches of our day. Yet, it is time that those who preach and teach the Word take a hard look at their own spiritual lives.

The easiest place in the world to be a hypocrite is in the ministry. Too many times we feel as if preaching and doing pastoral work is sufficient to please God and bring genuine change in people. We are continually doing "church work". We have allowed this to substitute for pursuing a genuine and authentic relationship with God. It is not enough to settle for the "appearance" of righteousness. Jesus warned about this danger in **Matthew 23**. There must be the pursuit of an intimate relationship with God.

I realize that pastors and evangelists have difficult tasks. I know that they have pressure and stress. Yet, this is no excuse for hypocrisy. This is not a valid reason for failing to pursue God. The need of the hour is men who know God intimately. Genuine revival is the overflow of men who have been touched and changed by God.

In past issues of *The Prayer Closet*, we have dealt with obstacles to revival. There are factors that can and will hinder our experience of genuine revival. God is sovereign in revival. He must grant this blessing. Revival is not something that man works up, but something that God sends down. Yet, God has ordained means to seeking Him for this mighty work of His grace and sovereignty. One of the obstacles to seeking Him for this is an apathetic and unholy ministry. Preachers can be a hindrance to revival.

This is not something that I say lightly. Yet, the time has come that we should not be more concerned about our feelings than our condition before God. Have we come to the place that we are

more concerned about offending men than we are about offending God? It is time that preachers seek God for genuine revival.

In a recent forty-day fast, God has burdened me concerning the need for revival in the pulpit. My heart's desire is for God to grant genuine revival in this state and across this country. Yet, this has to start in the hearts of those that stand behind the pulpit and lead the churches of the state and nation. As I have pled with God concerning this, He has convicted me that there are three areas that pastors and evangelists must confront. Those three areas are **personal holiness, prayer, and the Word of God.**

I want to challenge you to pray about these things. If you are a pastor or evangelist, I want to challenge you to pray about these things in your personal life. If you are a church member, I want to challenge you to pray about these things for your pastor. Yet, don't stop with your pastor. Plead for these things for the pastors and evangelists in your area. There must be a powerful work of grace in the lives of those that preach the Word and lead the churches of our land. It is time to stop talking about revival and start pleading with God for it.

The following are prayers that I would ask you to consider praying with me. This is a simple plan for pleading with God for revival in the pulpit. Yet, these are the areas that must be dealt with by pastors and evangelists.

"Father, I plead that You will give _____ a hunger to be holy. Cause _____ to pursue holiness with all his being. Show _____ his sin, lead him to confess and repent of it. Grant _____ a hatred of sin and compromise. Enable _____ to walk in the paths of righteousness (Isaiah 6:1-3; Hebrews 12:14; 1 John 1:9; Psalm 23:3)."

Those who would be used of God must be pursuing holiness with all their being. It is not enough to preach on holy living and sin. There must be the pursuit of these things by the individual. One should not believe the lie of the devil concerning this. The lie of the devil is that it is okay to have some sins in your life. There must be an unceasing pursuit of the destruction of all that is sinful in our

lives. One cannot be content with compromise in this area.

"Father, I plead that You would give _____ a heart for prayer. Cause _____ to continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving. Teach _____ how to pray. Give _____ a heavy, unceasing burden for prayer. Through this, enable _____ to lead the church in prayer (Matthew 7:7-11; Colossians 4:2; Acts 6:4)."

There must be a return to prayer among the pastors and evangelists of our state and nation. We talk a lot about prayer, its power and effectiveness. Yet, that is not a substitute for actually spending time with God. E.M. Bounds states the necessity of prayer by ministers by writing, "What the church needs today is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more and novel methods, but men whom the Holy Spirit can use—men of prayer, men mighty in prayer. The Holy Spirit does not flow through methods, but through men. He does not come on machinery, but on men. He does not anoint plans, but men—men of prayer." Plead that God would give pastors and evangelists a burning heart for intercessory prayer.

"Father, I plead that You will give _____ a hunger for the Word of God. Cause _____ to desire the Word more than life itself. Enable _____ to understand it, obey it, and proclaim it. I plead that You would reveal the truth of Your Word to _____. Grant as never before to _____ a heart to know and to teach Your Word (Ezra 7:10; 2 Timothy 3:16-4:2; 1 Peter 2:2)."

The foundation for genuine revival is in the Word of God. There can be no genuine work of revival without the Word of God. Plead that God would grant understanding in the Word to your pastor and that God would give him boldness to preach.

Should you desire to be an INTECESSOR or need to be PRAYED FOR, please contact Dr. Meador at the email, regular or web site address on the front page of this newsletter.

The Beloved Unbeliever Network is a network of intercessors who pray for believers who have spouses that are not Christians. This network of intercessors pray daily for believers who are in this situation. These intercessors have been trained and are committed to praying for believers who find themselves in this type of marriage. If you would like to be added to this prayer list or if you know of someone who is in this situation and would like to place them on this prayer list, please contact Dr. Kevin Meador. Please provide the following information:

- Name of the family members
- Church affiliation
- Any special requests

Any information that is submitted will be kept in strict confidence and the privacy of the individuals will be protected. Name codes will be given to each name submitted. The person sending in the name and myself will be the only ones who know the real name of the person being submitted.



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