

# Why Pastors Need Intercessory Prayers

Series: How to Pray for Your Pastor

Romans 15:30

## Introduction

(e.g.) Many years ago, I came to guest speak for OEM ... and while I was preaching ... there were some prayer team members who were interceding for me during my sermon ...

- How did I know they were praying for me during the sermon?
  - There were a few guys in the back ... with arms lifted up ... crying out to God while I spoke :)
- It was the first time I saw someone that intentional seeking to pray for me ... AND to let me know that they were in prayer for me.
- Can I tell you ... it was one of the most encouraging things I ever experienced.
  - Because 40 minutes is a long time to hold your hands up!
    - It made me want to preach longer!!! :)
    - But then they might be praying for me to end my sermon sooner :)
- It reminded me of how Moses would also lift up his hands in praying for Joshua and the Israelite army in their fight against the Amalikites in Exodus 17.
- As long as Moses' arms were lifted, Israel was winning ...
  - But when his arms got tired and lowered them ... they were losing ...
- So **Aaron and Hur** would take one arm each and lift it up ... until the victory was complete!
- That was a picture of the power of intercessory prayer ... esp. for spiritual leaders!

- We start a new series today (with a couple of guest speakers here and there) ... on How to Pray for Your Pastor

- It was something I wanted to do later this year ... but as I mentioned a few weeks ago ... the intensity of spiritual warfare has increased so much this year.

- With the release of my book ... which will equip the church to engage in the fight for justice ... there was clearly an increase in warfare as a result.

- And for many other reasons ... there has been an increase in resistance and friction in the direction I feel God leading our ministry.

- And so out of NECESSITY and even desperation ... I felt the need to move up this series to begin as soon as possible.

- Why? Because in short: I NEED YOUR PRAYERS.

- So we'll begin today by going over WHY pastors need intercessory prayers ... and for the next several weeks (Lord willing), I'll be giving practical ways to be in prayer for ME and the pastors in your life.

- So turn with me to Romans 15:30 and we'll explore today WHY pastors need intercessory prayers.

So why do pastors need your prayers and why should we pray for them?

*First of all ...*

## **God calls the Church to pray for her leaders**

- The Church has a vital role to play in the strengthening and supporting of its pastors through prayer.
  - Paul understood the importance of this intercessory relationship and so he frequently asks the churches to pray for him.

One example of this is found in Romans 15:30:

***Romans 15:30 ESV I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf,***

- Paul is asking for prayers from the church in Rome to pray for a successful journey for his ministry in Jerusalem ...

***I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit***

- The basis of our prayers are to be grounded in the **PERSON** and **work** of our Lord Jesus Christ!

- We have access to the Father in heaven ... in the place of prayer ... because of what Jesus did on the cross!
  - He made a way for us to have ACCESS and ADOPTION into the arms of our Father in heaven.
  - And what distinguishes Christian praying from all other praying is that we are not trusting in our work of prayer ... but trusting in the work of Christ to be the means through which we can gain access to the Father.
- And that is why we pray in JESUS name ...
  - It is through **HIM** our prayers are heard ...
  - And it is by **His grace** our prayers are answered ...

- And then Paul says:

***I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit***

- Another REASON we pray ... is out of LOVE for one another (love as the motive of all things)!

- By this all people will know that you're my disciples (Jesus tells us) by the way we LOVE one another.
  - And one of the BEST ways to love each other, is by praying for each other!
  - And one of the best ways to love your pastors is by praying for your pastors!

So true Christian prayer is grounded in the work of Christ ... motivated by the love that comes through the Spirit ... and THEN Paul says:

***Romans 15:30 ESV I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf,***

- So it's important that this STRIVING is an overflow of faith in Christ and out of love of the Spirit.

- You see, this term "strive together" carries with it, the idea of WRESTLING (like when Jacob wrestled with God at Bethel in Genesis 32)
  - Because sometimes ... prayer is a time to rest ... but other times ... prayer is a time to wrestle!
  - Paul is saying: WRESTLE WITH ME ... and WRESTLE FOR ME in the place of prayer!
    - He's saying FIGHT WITH ME! AND FIGHT FOR ME!
      - ... in the spiritual warfare that we are in ...
      - Fight for the greater blessings and breakthroughs ...

THAT IS INTERCESSORY PRAYER!!!

A FIGHT ... A WRESTLING ... BECAUSE WE ARE IN A WAR!

- Do you realize that God calls the Church to not just PRAY for pastors ... but to FIGHT FOR THEM in the place of prayer!

Paul also reminds Timothy that we MUST pray for our leadership:

***1 Timothy 2:1 ESV First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, [2] for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.***

- He URGES Timothy ... to lift up: supplications, prayers, intercessions ... AND THANKSGIVING ... for all ... but especially for our leaders!

- Pray for their leadership ... because HOW YOU BLESS YOUR LEADERS IN PRAYER WILL BE DIRECTLY CONNECTED TO HOW YOU ARE BLESSED THROUGH THEIR LEADERSHIP!
  - There is a direct correlation between HOW WE BLESS LEADERS IN PRAYER ... and how God will bless you THROUGH their leadership!
  - So he says: I URGE YOU!!! Pray for them!

In fact ... it's not only a command to pray for each other and our leaders ... it's also a sin to *not* pray!

***1 Samuel 12:23 ESV Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you, and I will instruct you in the good and the right way.***

- This is the prophet Samuel speaking to the servants of Israel ... reminding them that he will always be in prayer for them ...

- Because to NOT pray for them ... would be sinning against the Lord!

- So it is clear that prayer is a high priority to God ... and especially praying for our pastors and leaders is utterly important to God!

- God calls the Church to pray ... for her leaders!

Now we want to look further into the reasons WHY they need our prayers.

*For one thing ...*

## **Pastors will face greater accountability**

- Why do pastors need your intercessory prayers?

- Because we will face a stricter judgment ... and we are held to a higher standard.

***James 3:1 ESV Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.***

- Teachers here would be the equivalent to the rabbi's in the Jewish communities ... the spiritual leaders, the teachers ... and for today, the PASTORS.

- He's saying think twice about this role pastors ... there will be strict judgment that comes with it!

- Because our ministry involves SPEECH ... and James reminds us of how hard it is to control our tongue ... to use it well for God's glory ... there is a greater danger in the judgment to come.

- And with greater VISIBILITY ... there is greater RESPONSIBILITY ... because there is greater INFLUENCE!

*Luke 12:48 teaches us: Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.*

- Because pastors are ENTRUSTED with more responsibility of teaching and influence ... more will be required from them!

*Luke 17:1 ESV And he said to his disciples, "Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come! [2] It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin.*

- You see ... sin will happen ... temptations will happen ... but Jesus says: WOE to the person who INFLUENCES others to sin!

- That is why a commitment to teaching Scripture FAITHFULLY is so important!
- That is why the core of the gospel message must NEVER be compromised ...
  - We must call sin for what it is ... but also declare the grace of Jesus that came for sinners ... by His love. (In grace and truth!) :)

- Greater responsibility requires greater accountability.

(e.g.)

As this nation continues to grieve over the loss of hundreds of lives from the Sewol ferry boat accident ...

- The police and investigators have been doing a systematic check list of WHO was responsible.

- Arrests continue to increase ...

- The captain ...
- The crew ...
- The owners of the ship ...

- One by one ... those with the greatest responsibilities are held to the greatest accountability ...

- And the pastor is the captain of this ship ...

- In the end ... when we all stand before God ... it is the pastor who must give an account for the ministry (!)

- That is why I need your prayers ... and I need your support.

*That is why Hebrews 13:17 says: "Obey your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you."*

- It is HARD to lead ... it is LONELY to lead ... so it's important to support those who lead!

- *So that's one crucial reason why pastors need intercessory prayers ... and another reason is because ...*

## **Pastors will face greater attacks**

***1 Peter 5:8 ESV Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. [9] Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.***

- Peter says: be clear in your thinking ... realizing that there is a spiritual battle we are in ... and the devil is out to DEVOUR AND DESTROY people ... especially pastors!

- Peter Wagner says in his book Prayer Shield:

*"Make no mistake about it, the higher up you go on the ladder of Christian leadership, the higher you go on Satan's hit list ... Satan is more specific, persistent and intentional when it comes to pastors and other leaders."*

***Peter Wagner, Prayer Shield'***

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<sup>1</sup> "It has now become known that over the last several years Satanists, witches, New Agers, occult practitioners, shamans, spiritists and other servants of darkness have entered into an evil covenant to pray to Satan for the breakdown of pastors and Christian leaders. The spiritual warfare has intensified." Peter Wagner, *Prayer Shield*.

Consider these figures compiled by the [Schaeffer Institute](http://www.schaefferinstitute.org/):

<http://www.9marks.org/blog/dont-make-your-pastor-statistic>

- **90%** of the pastors report working between **55** to **75** hours per week.
- **90%** feel they are inadequately trained to cope with the ministry demands.

### **On their Health and Well-Being**

- **70%** of pastors constantly fight depression.
- **50%** of pastors feel so **discouraged** that they would leave the ministry if they had another job lined up right away ...

### **Concerning their Marriages and Family**

- **80%** believe pastoral ministry has **negatively** affected their families.
- **80%** of spouses feel the pastor is overworked.
- **80%** spouses feel left out and **under-appreciated** by church members.

### **On Church Relationships**

- **40%** report serious conflict with a parishioner at least **once a month**.
- And **#1 reason pastors leave the ministry** — Church people are not willing to go the same direction and SUPPORT the goal of the pastor. Pastors believe God wants them to go in one direction but the people are not willing to follow.

### **And on Longevity**

- **50%** of the ministers starting out will not last **5 years**.
- Only **1** out of every **10** ministers will actually retire as a minister in some form.
- Over **1,700** pastors left the ministry **every month** last year. (Just USA alone!)
- Over **1,300** pastors were fired by the local church **each month**, many without cause.

- Chances are, the pastors you know in your life are tired ... beaten up ... and discouraged ...
  - The late Peter Drucker, one of the leading management authors of our generation once said that he believes church leadership to be the most difficult and taxing roles in existence. (Resilient Ministry, p. 15)
  - He said bluntly: “The business world is much easier than the church.” (ibid, 15)
  - One reason is because in business you can go home and leave your work there ... but in ministry ... you are on call IN YOUR ROLE as a minister 24/7 ... 365 days a year.
- And that leads to extremely high stress levels!

- The pastoral position is one of the highest professions for heart attacks
- They are pulled in so many directions ...
- They are expected to be an expert in almost every field of study ...
- They are expected to have memorized the whole Bible and be able to know how the Bible ties in to every issue that comes up in the news

- Realizing the HIGH expectations with the feelings of inadequacy ... many experience discouragement and depression.

- All in all ... there is an all out attack against the pastor in this generation like never before.

*In Luke 22: Lk 22:31-32 “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”*

- So PRAY for your pastors (pray for me) ... and pray that our faith will not fail ... even when we do!

*But on an encouraging note ... another reason why pastors need intercessory prayers is because ...*

## **Pastors will become more effective**

- ... with prayer!

***2 Thessalonians 3:1 ESV Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you, [2] and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith.***

- Paul asks for prayer ... so that his ministry would be more effective!

- He says PRAY for us ... so that the Word of the Lord may spread ... and as it spreads ... people would RECEIVE IT and honor it!
- He asks for prayer for his ministry because he knows that PRAYER IMPACTS THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MINISTRY!
  - Ministries and ministers that are covered in prayer are more effective for the Kingdom.
  - You see, prayer releases God's presence ... in a special way ... God's power ... and God's purposes into the world.

- And for the Church, it is a win-win situation.

- When pastors are well prayed for ... the leadership is more effective ... and ministry is more fruitful ... and YOU get blessed too!

- Because anointing flows from the top down :)

*(e.g.) Study*

There was a fascinating study done on intercessory prayer for the pastor several years ago:

“Intercessors trained through Iverna Tompkins Ministries of Scottsdale, Arizona, agreed to pray 15 minutes a day for one of the 130 leaders over an entire year.”

- About **89 percent** of those surveyed indicated that the prayer had caused a positive change in their ministry effectiveness.
  - They reported more effectiveness in the use of their particular spiritual gifts, a higher level of positive response to their ministry, more discernment and wisdom from God, increased wholeness and completeness in Christ, improved attitudes, more evidence of the fruit of the Spirit, better personal prayer lives and heightened leadership skills.
  - And the research also uncovered a very important variable.
  - They found that daily prayer for leaders was more effective than weekly or monthly prayer.” Peter Wagner, *Prayer Shield*
- What became evident through this experiment is that PRAYERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF PASTORS AND CHURCHES!

- Pastors become more effective with a covering of prayer by the church!
- Your prayers (daily prayers) will ONLY have a positive effect on ME, our staff, our ministry.
  - Prayers are powerful!
  - Prayers make a difference ...
  - And prayers will BLESS THROUGH YOU ... and those blessings will come back TO you! :)

## Conclusion

- I'd love to try this experiment here at OEM too ...

- Can I ask you to pray for me everyday for the next couple of months during this series?
- Or better yet, can I ask you to pray for me daily for the rest of the year ... and let's see what happens ...
  - In terms of the fruitfulness of our ministry and the blessings within your own life as well :)

- God's word clearly calls the church to be in prayer for pastors ...

- With this high calling comes great responsibility ... and accountability ...
- But the enemy is out in full force to DESTROY and REMOVE pastors from their place of leadership ...
- But with prayers will also come greater effectiveness ... and blessings.

Let us grow to be a people of prayer ... let us grow to be a house of prayer ... because for our pastoral staff ... we need your prayers.

Because for a pastor ... the congregation's prayer support is the pastor's life support ...

- You see ... your prayer support ... is my life support ...

Let's pray ...