

Pray for Protection

Series: How to Pray for Your Pastor

Ephesians 6:11-17

Intro

(e.g.)

There was a true story I heard of a pastor who was on an airplane ...

- As he usually does ... he likes to strike up conversation with those next to him ... and if the opportunity is there ... to share the gospel.
- On this particular flight ... as he grabbed his seat ... the person next to him was already sitting ...
- He sat down ... was about to introduce himself to his neighbor ... but saw that he was praying.
 - His eyes were closed ... he was mumbling the prayer to himself ... and in his hands ... he had a list of names.

- So the pastor was like: Oh, nice, I'm next to a Christian on this flight ... and he's a man of prayer! :)

- As the plane took off ... the man praying finally opened his eyes ...
- **The pastor finally talked with him ... saying: "Hi! I noticed you were praying so I didn't want to disturb you before. I'm a Christian too! What church do you go to?"**
- **And the man replied: The Church of Satan ... I am a leader there ... and I just finished praying through this list of pastors ... that they would all fall ...**

- The warfare is real ... and there is an enemy that is out there ... to steal ... kill ... and destroy ...

- We are in a new series on “How to Pray for Your Pastor” and the reason for this series is because I felt the strong need to increase prayers for our church ... and to increase intercessory prayers for our leadership.

- There has been an increase in warfare this year ... and so there MUST be an increase in prayer ...

- Last week we looked at *Why Pastors Need Intercessory Prayers* ... so if you weren't here last week, I'd encourage you to listen to that message to get the overview of the MOTIVE behind this series.

- And for the remainder of this series, I will go through practical ways to specifically pray for the pastors in your life.
- And for today ... we begin with one of the most crucial prayers to pray for pastors ... and that is for protection.

Follow along with me in your outlines ... and we begin today ... by learning to ...

Pray for protection against temptation

Luke 22:40 ESV And when he came to the place, he said to them, “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.”

- In this verse, Jesus is engaged in SERIOUS spiritual warfare.

- He is on the Mount of Olives ...
 - He is about to face the cross ...
 - He is about to die ... (quite literally the greatest crossroads in history)
 - He asks His closest disciples to pray with Him ... His soul is in anguish ...
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- THE ENEMY IS STRONG AT WORK ...

- THE ENEMY WANTS TO TAKE DOWN JESUS ...
- THE ENEMY WANTS TO TAKE DOWN THE DISCIPLES ...
- Satan has asked to SIFT Peter as wheat ...
- The disciples will be tempted to leave Jesus ... to deny Him ... to betray Him ...
- Satan is working HARD ... to bring DOWN the servants of Jesus!!!!!!

AND SO JESUS SAYS: **PRAY!!!!!!!!!!!!!!** That you may not enter into temptation ...

- AND Jesus teaches in the Lord's prayer: **PRAY LIKE THIS!!!** "Lead us not into temptation" ...

- SO JESUS IS REVEALING THAT **PRAYER plays a vital role in the PROTECTION against TEMPTATION!**

- Prayer can release the power of God ... and the grace of God ... into our lives ... to overcome temptation ...

THEREFORE: PRAY ... FOR YOUR PASTORS TO BE PROTECTED FROM TEMPTATIONS!

- There is an epidemic of falling pastors all over the world ... the past few decades.

- The top reasons for pastors dropping of ministry are because of burnout, moral failure, or church conflict.
 - The lure of money ... and the lust of the flesh has disqualified far too many pastors from continuing on in ministry ...

- We mentioned last week how the pastoral position is one of the highest professions for STRESS and high expectations ...
- It is a lonely and difficult road too.
 - 70% of pastors said they have no close person to confide in
 - 90% work more than 50 hrs and feel their work never ends
 - <http://www.ministrybestpractices.com/2012/06/pastor-burnout-infographic.html>
 - 54% of pastors said they viewed porn within the past year
 - 50% of pastors' marriages will end in divorce ...
 - http://www.tonycooke.org/free_resources/messages/stats_trends.html
 - 40% said they had an affair since starting ministry
 - 70% fight depression ...
 - These are just a small part of why 1500 pastors leave the ministry EACH MONTH ...

[THIS IS CLEAR MESSAGE TO THE CHURCH: WE MUST PRAY FOR OUR PASTORS!]

THERE IS GREAT WARFARE AND TEMPTATION FOR THE PASTORS ...

- How are all these factors connected?

- HIGH stress ...
- HIGH warfare ...
- HIGH ISOLATION ... leads to HIGH levels of personal temptation!

- (e.g.) Just last month, Bob Coy, who was the senior pastor of 18,000 member Calvary Chapel in Fort Lauderdale stepped down from his role due to moral failure ...
 - He was in the top 15 sermon podcast downloads on iTunes ...
 - But he joins 3 other mega-church pastors JUST within Florida that failed within the past year ...
- Other high profile pastors are now under scrutiny for their lavish use of money on large homes, fancy cars, and even private planes ...

- There are great temptations that MUST be fought ... in the spiritual realm ... on our knees.

- And the principle we learn from these verses is this: THE MORE WE PRAY FOR OUR PASTORS ... THE MORE PROTECTED THEY WILL BE!

- But the less we pray for our pastors ... the less covered they will be ... the less protected they will be ... the more vulnerable to attack ... we will be!
- You see, there is a DIRECT CORRELATION BETWEEN PRAYERS AND PROTECTION!
- THEREFORE: COVER YOUR PASTORS IN PRAYERS OF PROTECTION AGAINST TEMPTATIONS! (Amen?)

- I don't want to be a stat ... (I don't want ANY of our pastors to be a stat)
- I want to cross the finish line ... faithful ... in the end ...
- And I'm going to need your prayers to do that ...

- Some people find it hard to think like this ... but pastors are FULLY human ... FULLY frail ... FULLY sinners ... just like you too ...

- We need your prayers ...

And another way to pray is to ...

Pray for protection against evil

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 [PRAY] that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith.

- Paul asks for prayers of protection ... so that he would be delivered from WICKED and EVIL men ... (because not all have faith) ...

- Why does he say: PRAY for protection for me ... against those who don't have faith in Christ?

- Because HOW we respond to the Gospel determines how we treat others!
 - People who LOVE the gospel ... love those who declare the gospel.
 - BUT ... those who are HOSTILE to the gospel ... will be hostile to preachers of the gospel.
 - If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first (Jesus reminds His followers)
 - *(e.g.) The hostility towards the gospel is only growing in this generation ...*
 - In the US now, if you say you're a Christian, you will be looked down upon ... and told to keep your beliefs to yourself (at best)
 - And in the name of tolerance ... you can believe and practice ANYTHING you want ... except Christianity ...
 - We are now in a post-Christian / ANTI-Christian world ...
 - WE WILL BE HATED BECAUSE WE LOVE JESUS.

- Most of the hundreds of Nigerian girls who were kidnapped and threatened to be trafficked were Christians ... with the kidnappers saying they have been successfully converted to Islam ...
- Also, a 26 year-old, pregnant Sudanese woman faces death by hanging for being a follower of Jesus ... and for marrying a Christian man.

- This is the direction our world is headed in ...

SO WE MUST PRAY FOR PROTECTION AGAINST THE EVIL THAT IS GROWING IN OUR WORLD!

- For those who hate God ... will hate the people of God ...

- You see, sometimes the enemy will use non-Christians (bc they are not filled with the Holy Spirit) ... to cause trouble for the believer.

- And that is why Jesus also teaches us to pray in the Lord's prayer: deliver us from evil ...

- *(e.g.) My family and I are in need of your prayers of protection from evil ...*

- The fight to end sex trafficking in Korea is heavy in spiritual warfare.
- It is a multi-billion dollar industry ... and there are deep levels of corruption (even amongst governments ... and law enforcement)
- There is great evil that is controlling this industry ...
 - AND they don't like people trying to get in their way ...
 - So we could definitely use these prayers of protection :)

But before we start demonizing people ... we need to remember where the real source of attack comes from ... and because of this ... we need to ...

Pray for protection against the enemy

*Ephesians 6:11 ESV Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. [12] **For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.** [13] Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.*

- Paul reveals in Ephesians 6 that the REAL source of our conflicts is NOT against other people ... but against other principalities in the SPIRITUAL REALM!

- So while we DO need to pray against evil ... we ultimately need to pray against the work of the enemy!
- Because the enemy's goal is to discredit ... destroy ... and to bring to death the spiritual leaders in the Church.

*1 Peter 5:8 ESV **Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.***

- Be alert ... and realize that there IS an enemy ... seeking ways to take you out, esp. leaders!

- You see, in every battle ... the top prize is to capture and take out the leader of the opposition.
- Because if you can take out the leader, the rest will be easier to deal with.

- You need to know that the enemy's aim is to attack the leaders FIRST and with FORCE!

- As Jesus says: Strike the shepherd ... and the sheep will scatter ...

- (e.g.) There was a city in South America who had 7 pastors fall all within that ONE CITY ... it led to thousands upon thousands of people leaving the church because no one could trust their church leaders anymore.

- (e.g.) There's a big difference in the EFFECT a fall has on a church when a congregation member fails ... and the senior pastor fails.
 - If a church member fails ... people may be surprised or sad ...

 - But if the pastor fails ... it effects EVERYONE ...
 - Non-Christians and nominal Christians may leave and never come back to a church again ...

 - The committed feel betrayed ...

 - The core is shaken ... the future is unknown ...

- So pray for protection ... from the enemy who wants the influence of spiritual leaders to be destroyed.
 - There was a married couple who came out of a satanic group after finding Christ ... and in an interview, they revealed that these groups would regularly cast spells and speak curses against the pastors in their cities:
 - The 3 areas they would focus their curses on were:
 - 1. To destroy their finances
 - 2. To destroy their families
 - 3. And to destroy their health

Peter Wagner reveals in his book Prayer Shield that: “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.”

And CS Lewis once said: “There is no neutral ground in the universe; every square inch, every split second is claimed by God and counterclaimed by Satan.

- We are in warfare ...

- And we need to pray for our leaders who are on the frontlines of this battle ...

BUT WE DON'T STAY FOCUSED ON THE ENEMY ... BECAUSE OUR GOD IS GREATER AND JESUS HAS ALREADY WON THE VICTORY!

- Satan is a defeated enemy who knows his days are numbered.

- But before the final days here on earth ... he wants to bring down as many people with him as possible ... so the war is still raging ... (UNTIL JESUS RETURNS!)

- The battle has been won ... but Satan still has some bullets left in his gun ... and he's going to keep shooting until he's finally locked up for all of eternity ...

THEREFORE ...

One more piece of advice is to ...

Pray for protection with the armor of God

- It is wise to PRAY THROUGH SCRIPTURE ... and let God's Word be your guide in teaching you how to pray!

- And a great way to pray for your pastor's protection ... is by praying through the armor of God into their lives!

Ephesians 6:14 ESV Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, [15] and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. [16] In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; [17] and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,

- Pray for the belt of truth to be STRONG ... upholding the TRUTH of the Gospel at all times ... NEVER COMPROMISING ... always bold.

- To live out Romans 1:16.

- Pray for the breastplate of righteousness to protect their hearts from compromise

- Pray for shoes that ready to GO and OBEY wherever God calls with the Gospel of Jesus

- Pray for the shield of faith to be STRONG ... for FAITH to trust and treasure Christ as supreme OVER ALL circumstances ... and over all attacks in life!

- Pray for the helmet of salvation to protect the MIND and thoughts of your leaders ... that the assurance of salvation ... and our identity in Christ would be their joy and delight!

- And pray for a growing knowledge and love for the Word of God ... the sword of the Spirit ... the weapon of the Word to be a well used in their life.

Conclusion

(e.g.) *Award-winning satanists.*

Bill McRae is the chancellor of two prestigious evangelical institutions near Toronto, Canada-- Ontario Bible College and Ontario Theological Seminary. Previously he pastored the North Park Community Chapel in London, Ontario.

- He reported this while he was a pastor: QUOTE: "It was brought to our attention that a group of satanists who worshipped in a church situation within London had committed themselves to pray to Satan for the elimination of a number of our evangelical leaders in the city through marriage and family breakdown. During that summer the cell group in London was honored at a particular satanist convention for being so effective and successful during that year."

- Why did they win the award? McRae says, "In the course of the previous year they had succeeded through their prayers to Satan to eliminate five of our very significant leading men from pastoral ministries through immorality and marriage breakdown!"
- Bill McRae says that he was very deeply involved with one of the pastors who was going through this nightmarish and disgraceful fall from Christian ministry.
- He says, *"We were very much aware of the desperate need for prayer; but I must frankly confess none of us was quite as alert to the reality of the satanic warfare we were fighting until it was all over."*

- Unfortunately ... that's often when people realize how serious prayers were needed ... when the damage has already been done.

- And THAT is why we need to FAITHFULLY ... DAILY ... pray for protection for your pastors ...
- May you grow to be a prayer SHEILD ... for the shepherds in your life.

Let's pray ...