

Pray for a Yielded Heart

Series: How to Pray for Your Pastor

Luke 22:41-42

Introduction

(e.g.) I know some pastors who LOVE following the latest trends ...

- The latest curriculum ... he buys it ... the latest video series ... he'll pre-order it ...

(e.g.) I know of other pastors who change directions whenever a congregation member complains about something ... or suggests a new course of direction ...

- But a people pleasing minister will eventually be a miserable minister ... because you can't please everyone!

(e.g.) And I know of other pastors ... who after pastor for several years ... lost a bit of their passion for ministry ... so they mainly play golf every chance they get.

- One of my friends told me how one of their pastor friends has a new life motto: "Only the best" ...
 - He used to use that motto for ministry ... but now it's used to determine which golf club he'll buy (only the best) ... and which country club to play in (only the best).

- Through it all ... I realized that it is HARD to maintain a HEART that is yielded to Jesus.

- We begin our Christian life with this desire ... but the worries, the cares, the toys of this world ... can distract the eyes of our hearts away from following Christ.

- You see, some follow the crowds ... others follow the latest fads ... but we are meant to follow Jesus and Him alone.

- We continue our series on How to Pray for Your Pastor ... and I'm glad that this is causing more people to pray ... for that was the intent.

- So how should we pray for our pastors? Well ... we should pray for:

- Protection

- Rest

- Anointing

- And today ... we'll look at the need to pray for a Yielded Heart (repeat) :)

- It is crucial that the shepherd of the flock ultimately follows the Great Shepherd of our souls!

- And that's what we want to be praying for :)

Follow along with me in your outlines today and let's continue to GROW as intercessors for our pastors ... who desperately need our prayers.

So why should we pray for a yielded heart? Because a yielded heart reveals something deeper ... it shows ...

It's a heart transformed by the gospel

- A heart that delights to do God's will is a heart that's been transformed by the gospel!

- Because it is THEN that you understand that: to do God's will ... DELIGHTS GOD'S HEART!

1 Samuel 5:22 ESV And Samuel said, "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.

- We learn that God desires obedience more than sacrifice.

- Extra acts of sacrifice do not make up for immediate acts of obedience.

- We often think we can make it up to God ... but God desires hearts that follow today.
- But the real problem ... is that we don't like to obey ...
- We are fallen in our flesh ... and LOVE to break the rules ...
- (e.g.) A public garden said that the sign they had to replace the most was the sign that says: "DO NOT TOUCH"
- (e.g.) And in the FIRST garden too ... the ONE TREE Adam and Eve were told NOT to eat from ... became too hard to resist ...
- (e.g.) The most popular books in some countries are the ones that are banned!
- Our FLESH IS DRAWN TO FORBIDDEN FRUIT.

- As the hymn declares: “prone to wander, Lord I feel it, prone to leave the God I love.”
- This is human nature ... this is our sinful nature!

- *(e.g.) Enoch shows this side all too well.*

- During bath time ... sometimes he'll want to turn the water back on ... and I say: “No, don't turn the water on” ...
- Then he'll look at it ... and look at me ... and tell me: “Daddy, go outside!! Leave me alone!!!”

- By nature our flesh does NOT want to obey!

- As Romans 15:19 reveals ...

Romans 5:19 ESV For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

- The disobedience of Adam ... made us all sinners ...

- BUT ... in Jesus ... the second Adam ... the greater Adam ... whose obedience to the Father was PERFECT ... it was HIS obedience that made us all righteous!

- The DESIRE to obey ... and the ABILITY to obey ... are now extensions of grace ... that comes through FAITH in Christ!
- It flows from a heart transformed by the gospel!

- The GLORY of obedience was seen and embodied in the life of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 2:8 ESV And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. [9] Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, [10] so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, [11] and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

- The greatest act of obedience was displayed on the cross of Jesus Christ ... and it was ONLY BECAUSE JESUS OBEYED ... that we are able to obey today.

- Because what faith in Christ does ... is it not only FORGIVES us of our sins ... GIVES US a new heart through which we can LOVE, SERVE, and OBEY.

Romans 6:17 ESV But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, [18] and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.

- You see ... the gospel changes the HEART of a person.

- Because YES ... we can obey out of duty ... and we can obey because we want to avoid punishment ... but when a life is changed by the gospel ... our MOTIVES and METHODS of obedience also change!

- And so by PRAYING for a yielded heart for your pastors ... you are praying for their heart to be transformed by the gospel ...

- So that WHY we do what we do ... WHY we obey ... WHY we serve ... WHY we sacrifice ... is grounded in ... and driven by ... what Jesus has done for us!
- Not to PAY JESUS BACK ... but to praise Jesus and thank Jesus for what He's done!

That leads us to our next point ... on why praying for a yielded heart is so important ...

Because when we obey ... it reveals ...

It's a heart that trusts the Lord

- For a heart that has been changed by the gospel ... one of the reasons we obey is because we TRUST the God who calls us to follow Him.

- So PRAY for your pastors to fully TRUST the Lord as we follow Him.
- A key verse in understanding obedience is seen in the prayer of Jesus before going to the cross.

Luke 22:41 ESV And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, [42] saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done."

- This is a fascinating look into the HONESTY and the struggle of Jesus before the cross.

- Father, I don't want to walk this difficult road of sacrifice and suffering ... if there's another way, let there BE another way ... but NOT MY WILL ... let YOURS be done instead!
- THAT is the prayer of obedience!
 - A heart of faith is one that says: "Even though it's difficult ... even though I don't fully know all that will happen ... God, I'm going to trust you and obey."

Hebrews 11:8 ESV By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.

- God did not give Abraham EVERY PART OF HIS PLAN LAID OUT AHEAD OF TIME!

- That's how we usually want it, right?
- God, TELL ME WHAT TO DO ... SHOW ME HOW IT WILL ALL WORK OUT ... AND THEN ... I'LL FOLLOW YOU!

- (But the problem with that is ... you don't need FAITH if know how it's all going to play out!)

- Instead, we must pray for *quick and complete* obedience to God's will.

- God's commands are not given so that we pick and choose what to obey ...

- (e.g.) OK God ... worship you on the Lord's Day? OK ... tithe? (let me think about it some more ...) ...

- Um ... sex only within a marriage covenant? Seems a bit outdated God (NEXT!)

- Don't murder (No problem, I'll obey that one)

- Don't steal (OK ... except taxes, right? Since they're stealing from me first?)

- God's commands are not given so that we pick and choose what to obey ...

- That's NOT Lordship!

- And it shows a heart that does not fully trust the Lord.

- In our faith journey ... when God reveals a WORD for us to obey ... obedience TO THAT WORD (or our lack of it) ... is our moment of truth!

- It shows what we believe about God ...

- It shows what we think about God ...

- It will determine whether we will see His mighty work in and through our lives ...

- And it will determine whether we deepen our intimacy with Him ...

- You see, obedience is a sign of a heart that TRUSTS GOD ... that we believe He knows what He is doing ... and He knows what is best for us!

- If you TRUST that God is good ... that He loves you ... and wants the best for you ... you never need to question His word for your life.

- God's word and His will is ALWAYS RIGHT ... ALWAYS BEST ... and ALWAYS the path to blessings! ALWAYS.

- So you can TRUST Him ... ALWAYS.

- Obedience from the heart ... brings blessings ...

- But obedience can be costly ... and we are told to COUNT the COST before we follow Jesus!

- (e.g.) Many say: "I feel God calling me to missions overseas ... but I think my kids should live closer to their grandparents ... I'm not sure about healthcare ... or education" etc.

- But if God is calling you there ... God will care for you there!

- Obedience CAN be costly ...

- (e.g.) One pastor I know baptized a young lady who was from a strong buddhist background ... her Dad told her point blank: DO NOT GET BAPTIZED or you're NOT a part of this family any more.

- She wanted to obey Jesus and be baptized ... so she did.

- When we arrived home after the church service ... her bags were all packed waiting for her outside the door of her house.

- Her family kicked her out ... (there is a cost to obedience)

SO OBEDIENCE CAN BE COSTLY (AND WE KNOW THIS VERY WELL) that why we struggle with it sometimes ... but you know what? Disobedience is MORE COSTLY!

- It can cost us deeper intimacy with God ...
 - It can cost us greater blessings upon our life and ministry ...
 - It can cost us growth in our character and our faith!!!!
 - And that is why the enemy WANTS to keep us off this path!
 - So the temptation to stay off that path will remain on this side of eternity.
 - So we need to remember that PARTIAL obedience is still disobedience ...
 - And DELAYED obedience is disobedience ...
- No matter how costly obedience may be for us (EVEN OUR OWN LIVES) ... disobedience is FAR MORE COSTLY ...
- And THAT is why God wants us to KEEP TRUSTING HIM ... that He is good ... and His ways are best.
- And because He knows that obedience will keep us on the path of God's blessings.
 - And God wants to keep us on that path of His will so He can continually bless our lives with more of Him.
 - Because a heart that FULLY trusts the Lord will obey QUICKLY and COMPLETELY.

- PRAY THAT for your pastors! That we would obey quickly and completely ... and keep US ALL on the path of greater blessings! :)

(e.g.) Story of Billy Graham at a crossroads (Sp Leadership, p. 102, The Leader's Character)

- Billy Graham, at 30 years of age, was at a crossroad in his life. His good friend and fellow evangelist Charles Templeton abandoned many of the beliefs of the faith ...
 - Billy Graham at the time was a successful college president and evangelist ... but the core of his life and ministry was shaken.
 - If someone so close to him in the faith could walk away from Christ and the Bible ... was he naive to keep trusting in them?

- He writes: “As that night wore on my heart became heavily burdened. With the Lo Angeles campaign galloping toward me, I had to have an answer. If I could not trust the Bible, I could not go on.

- I would have to quit the school presidency. I would have to leave pulpit evangelism. I was only 30 years of age. It was not too late to become a dairy farmer. But that night I believed with all my heart that the God who had saved my soul would never let go of me ...

- “Oh God ... there are many things in this book and in my life that I do not understand ... there are many problems with which I cannot offer a solution ...

- BUT GOD ... I fully trust YOU ... and YOUR WORD ... by faith.

- I'm going to follow you and trust this Bible you've given to us completely ... even if there are times I don't fully understand it all ...
 - When I got up from my knees that night ... my eyes stung with tears ... I sensed the presence and power of God that I had not sensed in months ...
 - Not all my questions had been answered ... but a major bridge had been crossed!
 - In my heart and my mind ... I knew a spiritual battle in my soul had been fought and won.

- HE MADE A CONSCIOUS DECISION ... JESUS, I'M GOING TO TRUST YOU and YOUR WORD FULLY ... from this day forward.
- Shortly after that night ... he began his LA campaign in 1949 ... and from that speaking tour ... God propelled him into international prominence and influence.
- Looking back on that moment, he says that God honored him ... for finally trusting Him! No matter what ...
 - A heart of obedience is a heart that trusts the Lord ...

But there's one more important element of an obedient heart ... and that's ...

It's a heart that treasures the Lord

- Obedience is a natural overflow of love.
 - When you love someone ... you are MORE THAN HAPPY to obey them ... and to serve them ... because you know it makes them happy.

John 14:15 ESV "If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

John 14:21 ESV Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him."

John 14:23 ESV Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. [24] Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me.

- Jesus is repeatedly making a crucial connection between obedience ... and love.
- For the life that has found Christ and trusts in Him ... obedience becomes an issue of LOVE and becomes an EXPRESSION OF LOVE!

- Henry Blackaby in his book Experiencing God says this about the connection between love and obedience:
 - “Obedience is the outward expression of your love for God. The reward for obedience is that God will make Himself known to you. If you have an obedience problem, you have a love problem. If you love Him, you will obey Him.” (p. 221, Experiencing God)
- Obedience is not a burden when love is at the heart of a relationship.
- We naturally want to please those we love ...
- (e.g.) One of my friends had an older brother who went through an EXTREME REBELLIOUS period during Jr. High and High School ...
 - The drug scene ... the gang scene ... you name it ...
 - Slept around (got his girlfriend pregnant ... and forced her to have an abortion) and he would come home REALLY late at night ... sometimes not coming home for days ...
 - Their parents were immigrant workers ... who had to work long hours to provide for their kids ...
 - He would often tell me how it broke his heart to see his parents crying at night ... wishing his older brother would come home soon ...
 - When he WAS home ... the house would be filled with screaming and fighting ...
 - Their parents often felt like they failed as parents bc of how his brother turned out ... BUT THEY WERE SO HAPPY THAT MY FRIEND WAS THERE FOR THEM ...
- He said that during his high school days ... there were many moments when he had a rebellious URGE in his heart too ...
- HE TOO wanted to disobey ... stay out late ... start sleeping around ...

- But he said ... memories of his mom and dad crying at night ... stopped him from rebelling ...
 - He told me one time: “I just couldn’t do it ... because I loved my parents ... I just couldn’t make them feel like they failed at parenting both of us.”
 - So out of love for them ... I obeyed.

- True love leads to obedience.

- More than loving his own selfish ambitions ... he treasured his parents more ... which dictated a heart that honored them.

- And those who TREASURE CHRIST above all other people ... will gladly trust and obey Him too.

- One of our missionaries shared recently: “Why am I on the mission field? Because Jesus said clearly in the gospels: GO to the nations ... and make disciples of all”
 - It’s because she loves Jesus she is on the mission field!
 - It’s because she loves Jesus she obeys His word. (The two go together!) :)

- And I love this about OEM! :)

- We have several members who are now studying in Law School, changing their careers because God’s call upon their lives to pursue justice for the oppressed because of what God was doing in their lives the past few years at OEM :)
- They changed the direction of their lives because of obedience to God ... because they love God.

- I love the fact that we have OEM members (many in Thailand, Cambodia, UK, Kuwait) ... again, changing the direction of their lives ... giving up their dreams ... because they are now with a Kingdom vision!

- And our pursuit of justice is out of obedience to God's leading ... because of our love for Him!

- We care for the orphan ... seeking ways for expats to now be FOSTER CARE parents for NK children ... because GOD LOVES THEM.
- We fight for the freedom and restoration of those enslaved in the sex industry of Korea ... BECAUSE GOD CALLS US TO BRING JUSTICE TO THE OPPRESSED.

• WE OBEY GOD'S WORD BECAUSE WE LOVE OUR GOD!

- I'll be honest ... there have been people who have told me point blank: "Hey Eddie, why don't you leave this church ... we're not into this justice stuff you're doing ... LEAVE and start your own NGO ... and we'll all be happy.

- I had to say: with all due respect sir ... I came to OEM out of obedience to God ... and I will leave when God calls me to leave (out of obedience to God) ...
- And we have moved into these justice arenas because God has called us to these places ... I will not leave because YOU tell me to leave ... I will only respond to what GOD calls us to do!

- You see, that is why we need to pray for our pastors to have a yielded heart before God ...

- The pressures to PLEASE PEOPLE is strong ...
- The words of criticism ... and discouragement from others can be strong ...

- An online study published in the March issue of the Review of Religious Research found 28 percent of ministers said they had at one time been forced to leave their jobs due to personal attacks and criticism from a small faction of their congregations.

- They are referred to as toxic congregation members ...
 - Who use power, pressure, and influence to push pastors out ...
- And unfortunately, they found this group to be growing ...
- So we need to PRAY that our pastors would TRUST and TREASURE Christ MORE than the applause of friends ... and the arrows of enemies ...
- That what we do ... is because we desire to FOLLOW HIM ... because we LOVE HIM!

SO PRAY ... for a heart that is transformed by the power of the gospel ...

- PRAY for a heart that TRUSTS the LORD ... as we respond to His word ...
- And PRAY for a heart that TREASURES CHRIST more than anyone or anything else!

Let's pray ...

- Confess and repent of our disobedience to the Lord ...
- Pray for our leadership to always have a soft heart before God ... to quickly and completely obey Him.