

Pray for a Effectiveness in Ministry

Series: How to Pray for Your Pastor

Colossians 1:9-14

Introduction

(e.g.) When I was growing up ... I always dreamed of being a professional athlete! :)

- Either QB for the Dallas Cowboys ... or 2nd base for the Chicago Cubs :)

- But as I got older ... my dreams shattered when while in college ... people my age were getting drafted by the Cubs and Cowboys ... and it hit me:

- I'm not going to get drafted ...

- THE DREAM IS OVER :P

- And THEN I started to think: Maybe I'll be a chaplain for the teams instead? :P

- I had a similar conversation with some pastors last week.

(e.g.) at the AIM Pastors Prayer Meeting last Thurs ...

- Shared and prayed with a pastor who was telling me about "his dreams" of success that came to an end too ...

- As he's approaching 40 ... he thought he would've accomplished a lot more by now ...

- He thought he'd be a Rick Warren or Bill Hybels or even a Billy Graham by now ...

- :(

- But he's been a faithful minister to his congregation through ups and downs ... for years.

- And I had to think: "wow, does he REALLY think he's been ineffective or unsuccessful as a minister?"

- It made me think about what we really look to ... when measuring effectiveness and success ...

- We WANT to be effective and successful ... we WANT our pastors to be effective and successful ... but what does that really mean?

- Does it just mean more numbers? Popularity?

- And that's what we want to explore today ...

- We are in a series on "How to Pray for Your Pastor" ...

- We need to pray for protection ... and rest ... anointing ... and a yielded heart that is always surrendered to the Lord ...

- This series is a reflection of Paul's heart for prayer from his churches too ...

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,

- This term "strive together" carries with it, the idea of WRESTLING (like when Jacob wrestled with God at Bethel in Genesis 32)

- 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!!!

- And today, we want to look at the importance of praying for "effectiveness in ministry" for the pastor.

- So turn with me to Colossians 1:9-14 as we continue to help develop you as an intercessor for the spiritual leaders in your life ...

So what does it mean to pray for effectiveness in ministry?

It means we pray for wisdom

- In order to be effective in ministry, one of the most important things we need is WISDOM from God!

Colossians 1:9 ESV And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding

- In this pastoral prayer of Paul ... we see he prays that the church in Colosse be FILLED with the knowledge of His will ...

- AND he PRAYS that they will be filled with ALL spiritual **WISDOM** and **UNDERSTANDING!**
 - WISDOM gives us the ability to walk in the ways that are pleasing to God!
 - It's about making choices that bring the greatest HONOR to God and the greatest good for God's people.

- It is something that we must pray for and something that we must GROW in!

- Even Jesus, we are told in Luke 2:52, ***GREW*** in wisdom and favor before God and men.

- And probably the most famous example of a spiritual leader asking God for wisdom is found in Solomon's response to an amazing offer from God.

- Solomon is now king over Israel and God asks him the question EVERY PERSON dreams of:

- God says: Solomon ... you're the king ... I love you ... I want to give you something as a gift ...
 - SO ASK ME FOR ANYTHING ... AND I'LL GIVE IT TO YOU!

- (e.g.) *It's like a dream come true for many of us!*
- Like when we were kids, we say: If a genie gave you ONE WISH ... what would you ask for?
- My friends and I would always say: "I'd ask for 3 more wishes!"

- But honestly ... what would you ask for?

- If you could be GUARANTEED ANYTHING YOU ASK FOR FROM GOD!
- ONE THING ...
- What would you ask for?
 - In our day ... what would it be?
 - (\$Million? \$Billion?)
 - A wife? Husband? Marriage? Singleness? A Child?

- Solomon gets the question we all would DREAM of getting ... ONE GUARANTEED ANSWER TO ANYTHING WE ASK FOR ...

- And what does he ask for? Let's see ... in 1 Kings 3:7

*1 Kings 3:7 ESV And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of David my father, although I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in. [8] And your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen, a great people, too many to be numbered or counted for multitude. [9] **Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?***

- Solomon can have ANYTHING from God ... and what does he ask for? Wisdom!

- He says: God! You've given me such an important role to play in the lives of your people!

- I don't know much!
- And your people are so important ...
 - So God ... I need WISDOM and UNDERSTANDING to know HOW TO LEAD, GUIDE, and GOVERN YOUR PEOPLE!
 - AMAZING HUMILITY ... an amazing request ... an amazingly SELFLESS request ...

- You see ... the decisions of a leader IMPACTS EVERYBODY!

- (e.g.) For NK ... the decisions that Kim, Jong Eun makes ... impacts the whole country ... it impacts their freedom ... their ability to work ... their ability to worship.
 - Just last week, it was reported that he had the 1st public execution of about 80 people throughout the country for various "crimes" such as possession of Bibles.
 - The decision of the leader impacts everyone under the leadership!
- (e.g.) We are also seeing the impact of a leader's decision in the US now to change attitudes and policies concerning gay marriages ...
 - It's a hot issue right now ... impacting the workplace and even church denominations now ...
- (e.g.) In Korea ... if a boss says: EVERYBODY stays in the office till I go home ... and he goes home at 11pm ... that impacts the life (and lifestyle of everyone)

- So the leadership decisions that are made by our top leaders effects our lives!

- ... be it for GOOD ... or for ill ...

THEREFORE: we need to PRAY for wisdom for our leaders ... so that WE WILL ALL BE BLESSED BY THE CHOICES THEY MAKE!

- And especially for the church!

- Where lives and souls are at stake ... we need to pray that our pastors and spiritual leaders would make good and godly choices to IMPACT eternity and to EXPAND God's Kingdom!

- It's not easy to figure out the BEST path of discipleship for a church ... there are SO many methods ... so many ideas ... so many opinions ...
- For such a unique ministry like OEM where we have SO many people from SO many backgrounds ... and it is SO transient in nature ... (what's the best way to do membership? Discipleship? Missions?)
- It's HARD to figure these things out ...
 - So we need to WISDOM from God to make the BEST choices possible to help a church grow.
 - So please PRAY for wisdom for us!
- (e.g.) Even in our pursuit of justice for Korea ... we need so much wisdom ...
 - What is the best way to handle the relationship we've been given with the head pimp over all of Korea?
 - How often should we do these RLD outreaches?
 - How much should we tell the pimps about our real agenda and faith?
 - We need WISDOM FROM GOD to lead us!

And where does wisdom begin? Proverbs 9:10 tells us ...

Proverbs 9:10 ESV The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom

- We BEGIN to make wisdom choices when the FEAR and reverence of God filters all that we do.

- If the motive is to HONOR GOD ...
- If the motive is because we FEAR and RESPECT and LOVE GOD SO MUCH ...
 - That will help us make wise choices!

- FOOLISH CHOICES ARE MADE WHEN WE LOSE OUR FEAR OF GOD ... and we lose of fear of sin!

SO PRAY FOR WISDOM AND UNDERSTANDING so that our choices and our ministry will be effective in honoring God in all things!

Another thing we must pray for ... when praying for effectiveness in ministry is ...

{It means} we pray for fruitfulness

- PRAY that our ministry would be fruitful to the glory of God ...

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,

- Paul says: PRAY FOR US ... so that the WORD of the Lord (in our PREACHING, TEACHING, and EVANGELISM) ... would SPREAD! ... and as it spreads ... let EVERYONE who HEARS the Word ... RECEIVE IT and HONOR IT!

- This is a prayer for EFFECTIVENESS IN MINISTRY!

- (e.g.) So for EVERY Sunday and Wednesday night of prayer ... when the Word is declared ...
 - PRAY that it would reap a harvest!
 - PRAY for salvation to the lost!
 - PRAY for a sanctifying INCREASE of love

(e.g.) Time in Sydney

- I was extremely blessed to be a part of a good work of fruitfulness while I was in Sydney.

- I first went there with the intention of just staying for one year ... NONE of the Korean churches had a full-time English ministry pastor ...
- So the KM pastor asked if I could come for a year, help step up the EM ... and then find someone else to come and I could go back to the US ...
 - So I went ... and we started our EM with about 8 people ... my wife did the OHP (PPT) ... a cousin played piano ...
 - But as we started preaching the gospel in English ... many of the youth were finally able to HEAR the gospel and UNDERSTAND the gospel in their heart language ... (English, instead of Korean)
 - People started getting saved ...
 - In fact, wherever I went to speak (bc no other churches had an English speaking pastor) ... about 90% of the group would give their lives to Christ ...
 - Not bc of me ... but because people were HUNGRY to hear the Gospel in their native language!!!!

- There were conferences and joint retreats that were set up of 300-400 people and most of them would find Christ and be so excited for Jesus ...

- It started happening in Sydney, Melbourne, Perth ...

- So we realized that I couldn't just leave after that first year ... we needed to disciple them.
 - So we stayed a bit longer ... and then our ministry grew within 2 years from 8 people to about 250 people ...
 - And that original ONE year plan turned into about 6.5 years :)

- I was privileged to see the answer to MANY people's prayers for that 2nd generation ...
 - What I was in the midst of ... was the answer to YEARS of prayers from parents and teachers ... for FRUITFULNESS in the lives and ministries for the next generation!

- You see ... most often when we see FRUIT ... it is because there were people PRAYING FOR YEARS ... for a breakthrough ...
 - For YEARS ... the Church around the world was praying for the former USSR to open up to the gospel ... and then one the the walls of communism fell ...
 - For YEARS ... prayers have been being collected for the transformation of NK ... and ONE DAY ... there WILL be great fruitfulness in NK for the gospel ... bc the prayers of the saints for that land!

Colossians 1:9 ESV And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, [10] so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

- Paul prays for FRUIT in the lives of the church!
 - Verse 10 says: "bearing FRUIT in EVERY good work!"

THERE IS A FRUITFULNESS IN MINISTRY WE PRAY FOR ... BUT ALSO, THERE IS A FRUITFULNESS IN OUR LIVES THAT WE MUST ALSO SEEK AFTER ...

- And how does this PERSONAL fruitfulness happen? Jesus actually tells us clearly in John 15:

John 15:4 ESV Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. [5] I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

- Personal fruitfulness is connected to our intimacy with Jesus ...

- It is important to strive not only for fruit in our ministry ... but also to bear the fruit of the Spirit within our lives!
- So that people will TASTE of the LORD in us ... and know that He is good!

- SO PRAY for fruitfulness for your pastors ...

- DEEP intimacy with the Lord that will result is an abundance of the fruit of the Spirit manifesting in their lives ...
- AND pray for great fruitfulness for their ministries ...
 - PRAY for salvation to come upon MANY within their ministries!
 - PRAY for believers to grow in maturity within our churches ...

- Pray for a great harvest of righteousness ... for the Kingdom of God ... and for this Kingdom to EXPAND within our midst! :)

- But there's an important footnote and addition to make in light of this ... and ...

It means we pray for faithfulness

- Pray for ministers of the gospel to be faithful to the holy task of declaring HIS WORD!

- Pray that we will be faithful to the truth ...

2 Timothy 2:15 ESV Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

- Pray that pastors will be FAITHFUL with how we handle the Word of God!
 - That we will not preach our OWN messages ... but ONLY what God has already spoken ... through His Word!
 - PRAY that we will NEVER water down the gospel ... never compromise the gospel ... but declare the TRUTH of the Gospel ... no matter how unpopular it may become!

And look at Paul's prayer also in Col 4:3:

Colossians 4:3 ESV At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison —[4] that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.

- In praying for effectiveness in ministry ... and faithfulness in the Word ... Paul asks for prayer to declare truth CLEARLY ...

- May we do our BEST with the skills and abilities God has given to us ... to present truth as CLEARLY and as effectively as possible!

- And pray that we will be faithful till the end!

Colossians 1:11 ESV May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, [12] giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

- This precious prayer that mentions POWER and JOY (in verse 11) ... reveals that our journey will be filled with difficulties and suffering ... (EVEN THOUGH THOSE WORDS ARE NOT DIRECTLY MENTIONED!)

- Why do we need His power to have ENDURANCE AND PATIENCE?

- We only need endurance and patience during difficult times ...

- We don't ENDURE through movies we love ...

- We don't need PATIENCE when things are going well ...

- We need endurance and patience ... when life is HARD ...

- When we are tempted to quit ... and give up the fight ... to get out of the race ...

- And pastors feel this ... WEEKLY ... if not DAILY!

- So PRAY ... that we will be faithful till the very end ...

- Faithfulness is what we want in the end ...

Matthew 25:19 ESV Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. [20] And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.' [21] His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

- These are the precious words we long to hear ... when we cross our finish line!

- And this is an important element to keep in mind ... especially for ministers ... because while we DO want fruitfulness in our ministry ... we may not always get it!

- MANY missionaries die without seeing the FRUIT of their labor of love.
- MANY pioneer missionaries do the HARD WORK of plowing the hard soil ... praying, weeping, loving ... only to see little or no results.
 - The early missions work in KOREA simply ended with locals killing the western missionaries to death!
 - (e.g.) Even in Japan (which is called the graveyard of missions work) ... because of how HARD it is to see fruit
 - ... there are SO many pastors and missionaries who have labored for DECADES without seeing people come to Christ.
 - DOES that mean their work was a failure? NOT AT ALL

- Because even more than FRUITFULNESS ... God values FAITHFULNESS EVEN MORE!

- The words Jesus will speak to His “successful servants” at the end on judgment day is “Well done, good and FAITHFUL servant”

- You have been FAITHFUL with a few things ... I will give to you more ... some and SHARE in your Master’s happiness! :)

(e.g.) Billy Graham :)

- I've shared with some of you before that one person who inspired me growing up so much was Billy Graham.

- I loved him ... admired him ... and I loved looking at his picture ... because he was a picture of lifelong faithfulness to me ...
- And yes, it's true ... I carried a picture of Billy Graham in my wallet when I was in Jr. High ...
 - While all my other friends had pictures of their girlfriends in their wallets ... I had a picture of Billy Graham :)
 - When I saw him ... I saw a man who not ashamed of the Gospel ... and that's how I wanted to be ...
 - When I saw him ... I saw a man greatly used by God ... and that's what I wanted to be ...
 - And when I saw him ... I saw a man who was faithful ... till the very end of his race ... and I wanted to run like that too ...

- I wanted to live for Jesus a little bit more ... each time I saw his face ...

(e.g.) And I have in my computer these days, photos of JI Packer ... Bruce Waltke ... Billy Graham pictures :)

- They are all over 90 years old ... all still faithfully living for the Lord ...

- And I want to be like that too ... when I near the end ...

Conclusion

- One story that I've been so blessed by recently was the life of Jim Elliot's brother ... Bert

- Few people are more well known in modern missions history than the martyr Jim Elliot ... whose books, journals, and quotes still inspire people around the world.

- He's the one who said: "He is no fool ... who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he can never lose."
- A light who burned brightly ... though for a short time ... and died in bringing the gospel to a people group who did not know Christ in Ecuador.

- And that's usually the HEROIC image we think of when we think of missions ...

- Go all out ... DIE ... be famous ... inspire millions to follow after Jesus ...

- BUT THEN THERE'S JIM ELLIOT'S BROTHER ... BERT ...

- He too was a missionary ... but definitely not as well known ... and died a quiet death 2 years ago ...

- Bert was a missionary in Peru long before his brother went to Ecuador ... he and his wife spent over 60 YEARS (since 1949!!) on the mission field there ... well into the 80's (before his death)

- One time in an interview about his famous brother Jim, Bert said this:
 - "Jim and I both served Christ, but differently. Jim was a great meteor! Streaking through the sky!"
 - But he didn't describe himself ... so another pastor did:
 - Though Jim was a shooting star (that everyone was inspired by)

- ... Bert was like a faint star that rose “night after night” ... faithfully crossing the same path in the sky ... “night after night” ... decade after decade ...
- ... pointing people out of darkness ... to the glorious light of the world ... until one day ... this star died ...

- One author put it like this: “In missions work, suffering sometimes results in a short life culminating in martyrdom, sometimes in a long life of daily dying to self and living for Christ. I believe Jim Elliot’s reward is considerable, but it wouldn’t surprise me to discover that Bert and Colleen’s will be greater still.”

“Multitudes that sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever” ([Dan. 12:2–3, NIV](#)).

- After a visit to see Bert and Colleen in Peru a few years ago, Lars Gren, Elisabeth Elliot’s husband, wrote, “They are available for any who call or that ring the doorbell whether expected or unexpected. Along with open doors there are the Bible Studies, their involvement in the Christian School... Plus an exceptional drug program leading addicts into a new life based on Scripture... All this after 56 years on the field with no thought of the rocking chair or hanging out a shingle saying, ‘busy, please call again’. What a life of service.”

- Lars goes on to write, “On our last day, Bert said that if he had been given paper and pencil and told to draw out the perfect wish and plan for his life, it would not have been half as good as what the Lord opened for them. He quoted from Psalm 16, ‘the lines have fallen for me in pleasant places.’”

- Bert and Colleen Elliot have lived a long obedience in the same direction. Whether we follow God to leave our country or to stay here, all of us are likewise called to a life of faithful endurance, empowered by Christ.

So let's PRAY for our pastors ... to be effective and successful in GOD'S EYES for ministry :)

- PRAY ... that we would have great wisdom to make godly and God-honoring choices ...

- PRAY ... that we would have fruitful ministries ...

- And PRAY ... that we would be faithful in little things and big ... until the very end ...

AND PRAY that we would ALL hear those precious words when we see Jesus: "Well done, good and faithful servant ... come and enter into your Master's happiness"

Let's pray ...

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