

Pray for Strong Marriages and Families

Series: How to Pray for Your Pastor

1 Peter 5:8 & Various Texts

Introduction

- Max Lucado in his book *The Eye of the Storm* tells the story of two boats carrying cargo down the Mississippi River many years ago.
 - They left Memphis about the same time ... heading towards New Orleans.
 - As they traveled side by side, sailors from one vessel made a few remarks about the snail's pace of the other.
 - Words were exchanged. Challenges were made. And the race began. Competition became vicious as the two boats roared through the Deep South.
- One boat began falling behind. Not enough fuel. There had been plenty of coal for the trip, but not enough for a race.
 - As the boat dropped back, a young sailor (*who had a strong competitive edge*) took some of the ship's cargo and tossed it into the furnace!
 - When the sailors saw that the supplies burned as well as the coal, they fueled their boat with the material they had been assigned to transport.
 - They ended up winning the race, but burned their cargo.
 - Their focus on the WRONG GOAL led them to DESTROY the very things they were meant to protect. (A common problem in our world today too ...)
- And that's what's happening today to a lot of marriages and families.
 - The WRONG GOALS lead to a destruction of the very things and the very PEOPLE we were meant to protect.

- God has entrusted cargo to us, too: children, spouses, friends in this journey called life.
 - Our job is to do our part in seeing that this precious cargo reaches their proper destination.
 - Yet when our pursuit of PROFITS and PROGRAMS take a higher priority over the PEOPLE in our lives ... it is the people who suffer the most.

In the Eye of the Storm by Max Lucado Word Publishing, 1991, pp. 97-98.

- We conclude our series on How to Pray for Your Pastor today ... and we end with one of the most important areas to pray for: the marriages and families of pastors.
 - This is one area that is often neglected ... by the pastor ... and by the prayers of the Church ... and as a result ... many have suffered silently ...
 - But we want to change that for OUR church today ... and learn to pour PRAYERS into the marriages and families of our pastors.
- Follow along with me in your outlines today and we'll look at how we can effectively pray for stronger marriages and families in the lives of our pastors.

So the first area to pray for ... would be to ...

Pray for protection

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

- And that someone is oftentimes ... the pastor.

- 1 Peter 5:8 teaches us the importance of being properly ALERT and AWARE in spiritual warfare.

- When he says “be watchful” it carries the meaning of being FULLY awake

- (DON'T DOZE OFF! Don't miss what's going on!)

- And it's also an echo of Jesus' words to His disciples in telling them to “watch and pray” ... so that you don't fall into temptation.

- So EFFECTIVE PRAYER is connected to BEING AWARE!

- So as you BECOME aware of how the enemy works ... that should impact HOW we pray!

- So as you BECOME AWARE ... KEEP IT IN PRAYER!

- When you LEARN of difficulties someone is going through ... PRAY for them.

- When you see the news of conflict in the Middle East, PRAY for the Middle East

- WATCH ... and PRAY!

- And as we grow in awareness in how the enemy attacks the pastor and his family ... that should impact HOW WE PRAY for their families as well.

- Because the enemy wants to DEVOUR them.

- So we begin and end this series with a plea for praying for protection.
 - Because if there's one area the devil is focused on attacking ... it's on the marriages and families of pastors.
 - The many surveys and books that I came across in researching for this series made it very clear for me that the ENEMY is out to destroy the leaders of the Church with great persistency and with great force.
 - And it would be safe to say that MOST of the churches who had pastors who FELL DID NOT have people praying for their pastor on a daily basis.
 - There is a vital ROLE that you play in the protection and coverage of your pastors.
 - And it begins with praying for protection for them.

THE STATS ARE BOTH SHOCKING AND HUMBLING TO LOOK AT:

- With 90% of pastors feeling worn out on a weekly or daily basis ...
- 70% constantly fighting depression ...

IT IS NO WONDER THAT THEIR MARRIAGES AND FAMILIES ARE IMPACTED:

<http://maranathalife.com/lifeline/stats.htm>

- 80% of pastors wives feel their spouse is overworked ...
- 80% of wives feel left out and unappreciated in the church
- 80% wish their spouses would choose a different profession

- Most of them said they feel pressured to be someone they are not ... to live up to the expectations of others ...
 - And as a telling sign: one survey found that most said: the ONE event that was most harmful for their marriage was the day they entered ministry (!) WOW.

(e.g.) In fact, one pastor shared how he asked his wife one time: “What’s it like to be married to me?” (*Dangerous question, no?*) :P

- He said: after 20 years of marriage and 18 years of ministry together, he was optimistic for her positive response.

- To his surprise, she said: “I can’t answer you right now. Give me some time to think about that question.”
- A few weeks later, he asked again: “Have you thought about that question?”
- She said: “Yes ... I know that I would never divorce you ... and I certainly wouldn’t kill you (um ... OK) ... However (she said) ... I can’t help but think that our kids and I would be better off if you were not alive.”
- (WOW) ... PAINFUL ... and Kinda depressing!

- But that’s a look inside the minds and marriages of many ministers ...

Here are some more sobering findings:

- **77% pastors surveyed said that they did not have a good marriage**
- 38% of pastors are divorced or going through a divorce process
- **And another survey by Fuller Seminary found that 50% of pastors marriages will end in divorce.**

<http://www.intothyword.org/apps/articles/?articleid=36562>

WE NEED TO PRAY FOR THE MARRIAGES OF OUR PASTORS (AMEN?)

- As we become AWARE ... we need to STAY in prayer!

- THE AFTERMATH of the enemy's attack is CLEAR.
 - Pastors are on the frontlines of spiritual warfare ... and THEY GET ATTACKED ... but also their marriages and families get under attack too ...
 - SO PRAY FOR PROTECTION OF THE MARRIAGES AND FAMILIES OF YOUR PASTORS ... AMEN?

And because of the attack that they come under ... we must also ...

Pray for strength

- So in the midst of the many challenges pastors and their families face, it is crucial to pray for STRENGTH in their inner being to handle all that comes their way.
- And where does this kind of strength come from?

Psalm 28:7 ESV The LORD is my strength and shield. I trust him with all my heart. He helps me, and my heart is filled with joy. I burst out in songs of thanksgiving.

THIS IS A GREAT VERSE TO PRAY THROUGH!

- The LORD is our strength and our shield ...

- That strengthening comes by learning to TRUST HIM with ALL our hearts.
- ***(I TRUST HIM WITH ALL MY HEART)***

- Through every season of hardship (TRUST HIM with all my heart)
- Through every season of betrayal (TRUST HIM with all my heart)
- Through every season of criticism (TRUST HIM ...)
- Through every season of rebellion ...
- In every season of suffering ... PRAY FOR THE STRENGTH TO TRUST HIM WITH ALL OUR HEARTS!!!!

Psalm 28:7 ESV The LORD is my strength and shield. I trust him with all my heart. He helps me, and my heart is filled with joy. I burst out in songs of thanksgiving.

- Therefore PRAY that God would strengthen them and fill them with JOY.
- (And as Psalm 28:7 also says) PRAY THAT there would be such joy that songs of thanksgiving would BURST OUT of their hearts! :)

Nehemiah 8:10 tells us:

Nehemiah 8:10 ESV for the joy of the LORD is your strength.

- True strength comes from the Lord!
- And true JOY comes from the Lord!

- You see, a unique thing about ministry ... is that it is a LIFESTYLE more than JOB.

- There is NO OFF SWITCH and there is no PUNCHING OUT OF THE CLOCK when pastors come home.
 - If anything ... those phone calls that come after hours and ESPECIALLY at night ... are the emergency situations that bring far greater stress than regular situations.

- (e.g.) One spouse said: sometimes I wish I just didn't hear the criticism or hardships that my spouse is facing ... but when I do step back away from it all ... I feel like I'm abandoning the one I love.

- You see ... the only thing that will truly sustain these marriages and families for the long haul is a strong FOUNDATION OF FAITH that trusts in the Lord ... that finds our DELIGHT in Him.

SO PRAY FOR STRENGTH THAT COMES FROM A DEEP JOY IN THE LORD!

But it is also important to ...

Pray for support

- And so we learn that with great challenges comes the need for great prayers for strength.
 - So we need to pray ... but also ... sometimes we need to be the answer to our prayers.
 - You see ... we can pray for the hungry ... but sometimes ... it's best for us to feed the hungry.
 - And this is another such case ...
 - Let us PRAY for a strong support group for our pastors and their spouses and families ... and as we PRAY ... let us also be the answer to those prayers ... by BEING a strong support to them.
- One way is simply being a friend to them.
 - The role of a leader and a pastor is very lonely ... few have close friendships.
 - *(In fact 70% say they have no close friend to confide in)*

- One of the reasons for this is because they cannot share a lot of the struggles they face in ministry WITH people in the ministry.
 - A LOT of stressful situations are confidential ... and can't be shared with others.
 - These stressful situations end up being shared only with the spouse ... and then THAT adds to the stress of their marriage as well.
 - You see ... marriages JUST ON THEIR OWN are filled with challenges and stress ... but marriages for ministers have even GREATER stressors that impact the husband ... the wife ... and the children.
 - So for many pastors ... and many times even MORE for the spouses ... they become very isolated ... and lonely people.

- So pray for the support of some strong friendships.

Proverbs 17:17 ESV A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

- They need friends ... and they need people to be there with them in times of adversity.

- A FRIEND LOVES AT ALL TIMES ...

- The other difficulty of ministry is that pastors and their families will feel they are under constant evaluation.
 - Good sermon today ... (but if one no says anything that day ... was it a bad one?)
 - Music's too loud ... too many new songs ... what about hymns?

- Are PK's allowed to have tattoos?
- Did you see what your daughter's wearing today at church?
- BUT IF YOU FEEL YOU ARE ALWAYS BEING EVALUATED ... THEN YOU WILL NEVER FEEL LOVED FOR WHO YOU ARE!

- And some of the biggest difficulties in ministry are the absence of people ... in ministry and in life.

- Even Paul went through periods of having to do ministry and fighting the battle alone:

2 Timothy 4:16 ESV At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! [17] But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it.

- Ministry is very difficult work ... and can be very lonely.

- When Paul was on trial in Rome for the Gospel, he says EVERYONE deserted him.
- But strength, joy, and support came from the Lord.
- But Paul also speaks of partners in the gospel who DID show great support, especially in Timothy:

Philippians 2:19 NIV: I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. 20 I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. 21 For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. 22 But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel.

- Pray for God to send Timothy's ... and Paul's (older brothers and sisters ... and younger brothers and sisters) to do life together with!

- Pray for supporters and friendships for pastors, their spouses ... and even their children.
 - So that instead of feeling like they are doing ministry ... and fighting ALONE ... it will be clear that there are many who support them and love them too ...

And a final thing to pray for concerning the families of pastors is to ...

Pray for strong discipleship

- The greatest place of discipleship to happen for the pastor needs to begin at home.

1 Timothy 3:4 ESV He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, [5] for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?

Titus 1:5 ESV This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you—[6] if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.

- So there is great biblical responsibility that is placed on church leaders and their children.
 - But because some do not LIVE OUT THE GOSPEL ... some families turn into legalistic households ... instead of places filled with grace, discipline and love.

- In another study done by the Barna Group, just for PK's, it found:

- 33% of PK's are no longer active in churches when they become adults ...
- 40% of PK's said they went through periods of DEEPLY doubting their faith
- 7% no longer consider themselves Christians
- And in another study, they found that 80% of PK's as adults have sought out professional help for depression or other types of challenges they faced as PK's (!)

- And the REASONS for the fallout from faith for the PK's are oftentimes because of:

- A legalistic atmosphere in the home:

- ***(e.g.) Katy Perry is a well-known singer who is also a PK.***

- She spoke of how even Lucky Charms cereal was banned from their home because she was told "Luck and charms" are of the devil!
- Other factors were the "glass house" they feel they live in (where EVERYONE is watching them ... with unrealistic expectations to be perfect)
 - (e.g.)
 - That's why many PK's are either angels or devils ... (PK: problem kid or perfect kid)
 - MK's (missionary): messed up kid ... or model kid ...
- Plus you have MANY who hate the church bc the father or mother (or both) were too busy at church and never spent enough time with the family ...
 - (e.g.) I know of one KM pastor who "bragged" to others saying that he hadn't eaten dinner with his family in over 2 months ...
 - I was like: Dude, you don't BRAG about that ... you REPENT of that.
- But another HUGE reason why children will leave the church as PK's is when FAITH was not modeled consistently at home!
 - We talked last week about the need to pray for RIGHTEOUSNESS and INTEGRITY ...

- When what is spoken on Sundays is not lived out on Mondays ... it WILL impact the next generation!
 - Hypocrisy and inauthenticity is DEADLY to the soul ... NOT just for the pastor ... but for their children as well!
 - So we must PRAY for integrity ... and for strong discipleship.

- But for the PK's who DID maintain their faith growing up ... the top 2 factors were:
 - **TIME ... and TESTIMONY**
 - For children and family especially LOVE is spelled T . I . M . E!
 - When kids never felt like they were forgotten ... they appreciated the church upbringing ...
 - Time with family ... and time with the Lord ...
 - Time taken to enjoy life together ... (pray for this to happen!)
 - *(e.g.) I'm really praying about how to make this a reality with me ...*
 - AND along with TIME ... the other factor that helped the faith of children was ... when the TESTIMONY of the parent in public ... matched the testimony of their family in private.
 - When they SAW real faith ... even at home ... they knew it was real faith to believe in!

- THEREFORE pray that the children of pastors would grow STRONG in the ways of the Lord.

Prov 22:6 tells us: Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

- Pray that THIS generation of PK's would be faithful ... and powerful in the ways of the Lord!
 - Pray that they will know the Lord from a young age and live faithfully for Him ... and LOVE JESUS for ALL the days of their lives! :)

[ADD MORE ON MARRIAGE IN THE BOOK VERSION]

Conclusion

- But the other reason why there are such EXTREMES between how PK's and MK's sometimes turn out ... is similar to the EXTREMES between North Korea and South Korea.
 - It is because there is great WARFARE whenever people advance the Gospel of Jesus Christ!
 - SK, in its earlier days suffered greatly ... which led them to PRAY greatly ... which led them to go ALL OVER THE WORLD as missionaries!
 - Contrast that to the great oppression by one of the darkest governments in world history in NK.
 - When the gospel advances ... the enemy attacks!
- Keep in mind what we mentioned in the beginning of this message: WHEN YOU BECOME AWARE ... SOAK THAT IN PRAYER!

- AND THE REASON WHY PASTOR'S MARRIAGE'S AND FAMILIES ARE IN NEED OF PRAYERS OF PROTECTION ... IS BECAUSE THE WHOLE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF THE PASTOR IS TO ADVANCE THE GOSPEL!

- And the enemy hates it!
- The enemy will do all he can to disrupt ... distract ... divide ... and even destroy ... the pastor ... the marriage ... the family.

- Now that you KNOW ... it's time to GROW ... as an intercessor for your pastors.
- Now that you're AWARE ... it's time to COVER US IN PRAYER!

Amen?

Let's pray ...

www.eddiebyun.com