



Pastors Need Prayer Too

by **Dr. Will Bruce**

in consultation with some of God's choice servants

God expects our pastors to take prayerful interest in our spiritual walk and the specific problems and needs of many.

Consequently, the pastor carries a prayer burden for every person in his congregation. But who prays for his needs? He is human too and he needs our prayers. What a blessing when someone says to him in private, "Pastor, you always have a place in my prayers and I'll be glad to pray for any special needs."

A delegation of American pastors asked Charles Spurgeon the secret for his success. In response, Spurgeon led them to the lower level of his meeting house and quietly opened the door. The visitors saw over 400 people praying for God's blessing and power to rest upon their pastor who would stand in the pulpit to preach the Word of God that night. "There, Gentlemen," said Spurgeon, "is the secret for God's blessing His work here."

The Apostle Paul, a man of deep prayer, begged the church to pray for him. His ardent request was, "I beseech you brethren ... that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me" Romans 15:30. (Ephesians 6:18-20; 2 Corinthians 1:8-12).

No matter how well you pay your pastor, praise him or work for

him, it is only through earnest, strategic prayer that you can ever really help him be an effective minister in the hands of Almighty God. Every pastor needs prayer for his personal needs, for spiritual wisdom and power, for his family, and for his overseeing God's flock (1 Peter 5:2).

Do not be overwhelmed by the number of suggested areas for prayer listed in this pamphlet; rather let the Holy Spirit lead you in making selections as you pray daily for your pastor and watch God work.

PERSONAL NEEDS

True Humility

Pray that your pastor will keep a teachable spirit ... that he will have the grace to receive criticism and profit by it ... that he will have a servant's heart ... that he will cultivate true humility in his walk, depending on God, not upon his education, methods or personality ... that he would always pray and wait on God's leading and timing and then in both his successes and his failures, in all things, that he will be careful to give God all the glory. Pray against pride so that he will remain useable.

Stability

Since we live in this carnal world with all its open and hidden pressures, pray that your pastor will keep his eyes on the Lord and serve with singleness of heart and will not become conceited over success or depressed by failure. Pray he will remember that Christians "march to a different drum" ... that our value system is different from that of the world.

Relationships

Pray that your pastor will know how to deal with his own frustrations, with the lack of gifts in certain areas, with well-meaning-but-

stubborn people in his congregation ... that he will walk in true brokenness for it is no easier for a pastor to say, “I am wrong,” or “I am sorry,” than it is for anyone else ... that he will be patient with himself and others as he fulfills his varied responsibilities ... that Calvary love will be shown in all interpersonal relationships ... that he will sense the love and support of his congregation.

Joy

Pray that your pastor will find real joy in his ministry in spite of spiritual struggles and problems. (John 16:24; 17:13) Joy is a significant hallmark of being filled with the Spirit—joy, great joy and peace, in the midst of and despite all circumstances. (2 Cor. 4:7-18, James 1:2-4, 1 Peter 1:6-9, Eph. 5:18-21)

Health

Pray for your pastor's health and the lessons God will teach him in his time of sickness and recovery—resting in God's will and timing ... pray that he will maintain balance in exercise and recreation. Intercede, too, for safety as he travels.

Self Discipline

Since the pastor must prioritize and guard his time, be disciplined, and learn to say “no,” pray that the Holy Spirit will make him sensitive in these matters ... that he will deal with role conflicts and stress in the Spirit and not in the flesh which results in “burnout.” (Matthew 11:30)

FAMILY NEEDS

Family Relationships

A pastor and his family live a kind of “fish-bowl” lifestyle. Therefore God's people need to respect the time they need as a family and pray ... that husband and wife will be devoted to one another and will be

deeply related to each other ... that he maintain a scriptural family seeking God's wisdom for the discipline of his children. Pray also for balance in time and attention given his wife and children as he strives to provide good spiritual leadership for them.

Pressures

Pointed prayer is needed as your pastor and his family face daily temptations, stresses, peer pressures, and satanic attacks because they are special targets of the enemy. On the other hand, pray the church leaders will recognize the personal, spiritual, physical, material and social needs of the pastor and his family so that they may not need to become overly preoccupied with the affairs of this life. (2 Tim. 2: 3-4; 1 Tim. 5:17-18)

SPIRITUAL NEEDS

Spiritual Freshness

Pray that your pastor will "walk in the light" with Jesus daily and depend on the power of the Spirit in all phases of his life and ministry. Because the pastor's hardest job will be to keep spiritually fresh, pray that he always remembers these facts concerning spiritual vitality: (1) the ministry is spiritual warfare, not just a job or a profession; (2) life's pressures will always result in spiritual decline unless he is careful to maintain a close walk with the Lord; (3) his need for spiritual enlightenment. Pray he continues to grow in Christ-like maturity, realizing who he is in Christ, keeping short accounts with God.

Prayer

Pray that your pastor will understand the absolute necessity for prayer and that he will prioritize his prayer life despite his very busy schedule. Over one hundred years ago, Lord Cecil said, "The greatest menace to ministerial usefulness crouches at the door of the secret

place.” Pray that your pastor will model an effective prayer life.

Integrity

Pray that he will resist moral temptation in line with who he is and Whom he serves—the Holy God ... that his words and his actions will set a godly example and also that his thought-life will glorify God, and not pave the way for him and others to fall into immorality.

Spiritual Warfare

Above all, pray that your pastor will appropriate the full armor of God as outlined in Ephesians 6:10-18, being constantly aware of Satan’s strategy at all times. Pastors are subject to the three-fold satanic temptation of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, just as everyone else (1 John 2:16). Pray that he will continually realize victory comes only through Christ ... that he have the Word hidden in his heart and his armor on at all times and know how to use the Sword of the Spirit in dealing with satanic opposition, oppression and possession.

Accountability

Pray that God will bless him with church leaders to whom he is accountable and that he will cultivate the friendship of at least one godly man (in or out of his congregation) to whom he will be especially open, transparent and spiritually accountable in all areas of his life and ministry ... that he will be keenly aware of the effects of his actions on the testimony of our Lord, on the church at large, on his own flock, as well as on his family and himself and, above all, aware of his accountability to God.

CONGREGATIONAL NEEDS

Pulpit Preparation

Since the Word of God and His Spirit do the lasting work in the

church, pray that your pastor will give priority to the study of the Word and to prayer. Study in sermon preparation must not be a substitute for personal communion with God nor for a time of private worship. Lord Cecil also said, "The greatest defect in the pastor's life is the lack of the devotional habit." Pray for a prepared pastor as well as a prepared sermon ... that his messages will not reflect human pressures but only the leading of the Holy Spirit ... that the pastor will give a balanced presentation of the Scriptures and not go off on tangents ... that he will present missions and evangelism as God's heart emphasizes in the scriptures.

Christ-Centered and Christ-Exalting Preaching

Pray that the pastor's preaching will be "less of I and more of Christ" (Gal. 2:20) to edify the people and increase their love for Jesus and devotion to our Savior ... that God will show them how to develop a life of worship ... and emphasize the need to go home and feed themselves.

Fruitful Relationships

Pray that in all his relationships he will be discerning, open, flexible, understanding, and forgiving ... that he will be patient ... and that he will make himself available to his people. Pray he will have a heart of compassion, be a good listener balancing tenderness with wisdom, and firmness with love.

Individual Growth

Pray that with boldness, tenderness and love, your pastor will uncompromisingly confront sin. Pray his words will be loving, but firm; and that the people will respond to the conviction of the Holy Spirit ... that he will preach for a response in changed life styles ... that individuals will become progressively more Christ-like and not merely add to their store of Biblical knowledge ... that the pastor will deal with anything in his own life that is not in line with who he is

and Whom he serves. (Matt. 18: 15-35)

Mobilization

Also, pray that your pastor will encourage God's people in all the various stages of Christian growth and to help them discover their spiritual gifts by stepping out to fill a need ... that God will equip his people to train disciples ... that the pastor will be absolutely committed to mobilizing the gifts of the body.

Discernment

Pray for your pastor to have discernment in all areas including: (1) how to apply the Word of God to specific situations; (2) how to present Biblical truth so that it will be understood and put into practice; and (3) how to rightly assess and utilize the abilities and gifts of others. In view of the excessive demands on his time, pray that he will have discernment as to what God wants him to do and how God wants it done. Human discernment is always inadequate, but the mind of Christ is the sole judge for deciding what to say or do in all matters and actions, "That nothing be done out of selfish ambition or vain conceit." (Philippians 2:3-8 NIV) Pray for stability in the pastor's life, since it is so easy to be swayed by trends, fads, and by winds of doctrine ... that he will keep balanced in all things ... that he will emphasize the need for all ages in the congregation to be united in love as God's family.

Counseling

Furthermore, pray that your pastor will not abandon his God-given right and responsibility to counsel his people in the wisdom of the Holy Spirit from the Word of God and call them to repent from and deal with any sin in their lives. Pray that he will not feel that psychology and the "how-to-do programs" rather than the Bible, have the answers for today's troubled souls.

A FURTHER SUGGESTION

As you pray for your pastor you will discover that your hearts are knit together in a common purpose. You will understand that he, like Elijah, is “a man, just like us” yet he is the man who has been appointed by the Holy Spirit as your pastor (Acts 20:28). Don't pray “at him,” but for him, and as you do, you will experience the marvelous way in which the Holy Spirit will bring to your mind special needs about which you should pray.

Finally, should you experience frustration in praying for your pastor, study and use the prayers of the Apostle Paul; they give much fuel for prayer. Please note: Ephesians 1:15-23, 3:14-21; Philippians 1:9-11; 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 and 2 Corinthians 1:9-11.

“For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of His will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please Him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to His glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.” Colossians 1:9-12, NIV



(Founded as the China Inland Mission by Hudson Taylor in 1865)

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