

PASTORS NEED PRAYER TOO

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

The apostle Paul, himself a man of deep prayer, knew the unrivaled effectiveness of prayer in the ministry. He begged the church to pray for him: "I urge you, brothers... that you join me in my struggle by praying to God for me." (Romans 15:30; Ephesians 6:18-20; 2 Corinthians 1:8-12)

Your pastor knows it is only through earnest, strategic prayer that he will be an effective minister in the hands of God. He, like Paul, urges you to pray for him—for his personal needs, for his family and for wisdom and power as he oversees the flock of God.

Will you let the Holy Spirit lead you as you pray in faith through the following needs, expecting God to work?

PERSONAL NEEDS

True humility

Pray that your pastor will have a teachable spirit, able to receive criticism graciously and to profit from it; to receive praise without becoming proud, giving God all the glory. Pray he will depend on God for a fruitful ministry and not on his education, methods or personality. Pray that he will have a servant heart, eager to serve others and not expecting to be served.

Stability

Pray that he will keep his eyes on the Lord and serve him with singleness of heart, not yielding to pride in his successes or to depression in his failures. Pray he will not be caught up in the world's pressures or value system.

Relationships

Pray he will know how to deal with situations that frustrate him—his lack of gifts in some areas, or confrontations by well-meaning but ungracious people in his congregation. Pray that when others are right, he will accept God's grace to say "I was wrong" or "I am sorry." Pray that he will be patient with himself and with others, that he will show sacrificial love in interpersonal relationships, and that he will help his congregation to unite in love as God's family.

Joy

Pray that your pastor will have joy in his ministry in spite of spiritual struggles and problems (John 16:24; 17:13)—a joy and peace that comes from being filled with the Holy Spirit and is experienced in the midst of all circumstances. (2 Corinthians 4:7-18; James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:6-8; Ephesians 5:18-21)

Health

Pray for good health, and pray that he will maintain balance with exercise, recreation and discipline in his eating habits. Pray too that in times of sickness, he will rest in the Lord and learn God's rich lessons.

Self discipline

Prioritizing and then guarding his time will mean your pastor will have to say "no" at times. Pray he will deal with role conflicts and added stress by depending on the Holy Spirit and not on the flesh which could result in burnout. (Matt. 11:30)

FAMILY NEEDS

Family relationships

A pastor and his family live a kind of fish-bowl lifestyle, so pray that his congregation will respect the time they

need as a family. Pray that he and his wife will be devoted to each other and relate well as they try to maintain a scriptural family, seeking God's wisdom for the training and discipline of their children.

Pressures

Your pastor and his family will be special targets of the enemy. They will, therefore, need prayer to face daily temptations, stresses, peer pressures and satanic attacks. Also pray that the church leaders will recognize and provide for the family's personal, spiritual, physical, material and social needs so that they need not be distracted from their ministry. (2 Timothy 2:3-4; 1 Timothy 5:17,18)

SPIRITUAL NEEDS

Spiritual freshness

Pray that your pastor will daily "walk in the light" with Jesus and depend on the power of the Spirit in all areas of his life and ministry. His hardest job will be to keep spiritually fresh, so pray that he will always remember: □1) his ministry is not merely a job or a profession but is intense spiritual warfare, 2) life's pressures can easily result in spiritual decline unless he is careful to maintain a close walk with the Lord, 3) he needs spiritual enlightenment. Pray he will continually grow into Christ-likeness, realizing who he is in Christ and being transparent before God.

Prayer

Pray that your pastor will prioritize his prayer life despite his busy schedule. Over one hundred years ago a distinguished British statesman, Lord Cecil, said, "The greatest menace to ministerial usefulness crouches at the door of the secret place." Pray your pastor will model an effective prayer life.

Integrity

Pray that he will resist moral temptation. Pray that his words and actions will always be a godly example, and pray that his thought life will glorify God and not pave the way for himself or others to fall into sin.

Spiritual Warfare

Pray your pastor will appropriate God's armor at all times to guard against Satan's strategic attacks. (Ephesians 6:10-18) Your pastor, like all Christians, is subject to the enemy's three-fold temptations: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. (1 John 2:16) Pray that he will know victory through Christ, use the word of God hidden in his heart and always wear his armor to deal with the enemy's opposition and oppression.

Accountability

Pray for church leaders who will hold your pastor spiritually accountable. Also pray for the close friendship of one godly man with whom he can be especially transparent as well as spiritually accountable in all areas of his life and ministry. Above all, pray he will hold himself accountable to God, knowing the effect his words and actions will have on the testimony of our Lord, on the church at large, on his own flock, and on his family and himself.

CONGREGATIONAL NEEDS

Pulpit preparation

Pray that your pastor will give high priority to the study of God's word and to prayer for his messages. Pray he will guard against using his preparation of sermons as a substitute for his personal communion with God. Lord Cecil also said, "The greatest defect in the pastor's life is the lack of the devotional habit." Pray for a prepared pastor and a balanced sermon that will reflect the leading of the Holy Spirit and present missions and evangelism as God's heart-burden.

Christ-centered and Christ-exalting preaching

Pray that your pastor's preaching will exalt Christ and encourage the people in their love and devotion to Jesus. Pray that his people will develop a life of worship and feed on the word of God personally in their private devotions.

Fruitful relationships

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

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balancing tenderness with wisdom and firmness with love.

Congregational growth

Pray that with courage, tenderness and love, your pastor will confront sin in his congregation and that the people will allow the Holy Spirit to affect a change in their lives. Pray that his church will become progressively more Christlike by applying the word of God to their lives and not merely adding to their store of Bible knowledge. Pray also that your pastor will deal with anything in his own life that is not in line with his calling and with God.

Mobilization

Pray your pastor will be committed to helping his people discover their spiritual gifts and to encouraging them to step out and fill needs within the body. Pray that the people in turn will be equipped by God to train other disciples.

Discernment

Pray he will have discernment to know how to apply the word of God to specific situations, and how to present biblical truth so that it will be understood and put into practice. Pray he will discern what God wants him to do and how God wants it to be done. Pray he will do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. (Philippians 2:3-8)

Counseling

In addition, pray that your pastor will utilize his God-given responsibility to counsel his people from God's word and in the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. Pray he will not feel that psychology and self-help programs, though at times useful, have the answer to today's troubled souls, but that he will rely on the Bible as the supreme source of help.