

Prayers in Support of Leaders and Pastors

April Motl

Many of us have seen the statistics about the **stresses pastors deal with** as part of their call to serve God and church. But what do we do about it? How do we tangibly help our pastors in their calling? How do we practically guard our church family from unnecessary heart breaks?

As a pastor's wife, I've come to realize one of the most valuable blessings comes when I pray and when others pray for my husband and our church leadership.

People can offer hands and hearts until we are all worn out with serving. People can donate money for awesome causes. We can have and experience all kinds of amazing things together as a church; but without the covering and lifting power of prayer, those fruitful moments can get troubled and robbed all too quickly.

Here are ten areas in which you can pray over your pastors, leaders, and church in general, that will bless and protect your church leadership.

Each point is based on a Scripture passage, paraphrased into a prayer. You can place the leader's name in the blank.

1. Pray that leaders can remain steadfast.

Everyone, especially those in people helping professions, can feel like their labors are in vain. Your pastor is no different in his vulnerability to discouragement!

I remember a story about a fellow pastor's family. The pastor, who was building his home, finished hanging some sliding closet doors. His wife came in to find him just gazing at the doors.

When she asked why he wasn't moving on to the next thing, he replied, "Because I needed to soak in a moment of *done*. People's needs at church are never done. Evangelism is never done. Nothing with my work is ever done. But these doors are done. And it feels really good!"

Your pastors and leaders need prayer support to help them stay the course because the work is never done and that can tempt you to feel like your labors are in vain.

Lord, please cause _____ to be steadfast, immovable, and always abounding in Your work. Help them to know that their toil is not in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:58)

2. Pray that leaders can diligently stay the course.

As a pastor or leader, you can get called to serve but in serving, you can actually forget to feed the spiritual gift that was entrusted to you. Pastors get pulled in so many directions, that the importance of their calling can get lost in the shuffle of all the other demands.

I remember a seminary professor telling us about a dear friend and fellow pastor who resigned because he could no longer bear the constant bickering of his congregation. The bylaws of the church allowed a vote for every single line item in the budget. The lengthy meetings over whether they should have pink or white toilet paper (I guess that was a thing when he was serving) took their toll. The well was dry and he was out of there! Pink toilet paper became a sort of code word for my husband and I to remember to not let the little things muddle the eternal.

Pray for your pastor to not be pulled off the course of his calling and for the Lord to provide opportunity for the leaders of your church to fan the flame entrusted to them.

May _____ not be distracted, discouraged or doubtful and thus neglect the spiritual gift You have given him/her. Give them the tenacity to take great pains to maintain the path You have cleared for them and to be absorbed in the work You have laid before them. (1 Timothy 4:14-15)

3. Pray for confidence.

Leaders often are thought of as confident, but the reality is that leaders get their confidence pulled through the wringer constantly. It might even be argued that some of the worst behavior you see from people is when their confidence is crumbling and they are grabbing hold of anything and everything to stay emotionally afloat.

Pray for your pastors and leaders to have solid confidence in Christ! Pray for that confidence to be purely set on God alone and for their Christ-confidence to be protected in their hearts.

Lord protect _____'s sense of confidence in You. Grace _____ to not misplace any confidence in the flesh (their own accomplishments or the abilities of other people). Direct _____ to draw near to Your throne of grace with confidence for their every need. (Philippians 3:3 and Hebrews 4:16)

4. Pray words of encouragement.

So often I see encouragement fuel my family in Christ on in their journey of faith. A simple word from a brother or sister sparks another on to grow in sweet and beautiful ways.

I love watching that bloom in our spiritual family. Your pastors and leaders also need encouragement to bloom! Pray for encouragement over them to walk in the fullness of their calling.

Lord, I pray that You would send a spirit of encouragement to _____ so that they might walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which they have been called; lead them to walk with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for those around them in love, and that they would be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Ephesians 4:1-3)

5. Pray for wisdom.

One of the warnings Paul gave Timothy was to avoid the battle of words that simply results in wounded hearts and churches. Not only might the leadership in your church need your prayer covering for this matter, but the church as a whole probably does as well.

Shepherding a congregation to a mature place of concern and awareness of how the enemy uses contentions to distract the family of Christ would be a blessing worth your prayer time! That one element of church life can make or break a congregation.

Lord, teach us how to avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, strife, and disputes about the Law; for they are unprofitable and worthless. Teach us how to reject a divisive person after a first and second warning, knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned. (Titus 3:9-11)

6. Pray that leaders can fulfill the mandates of Scripture.

Sometimes it can be tempting to fill needs with people only because those people are available. Sometimes, leadership roles are filled with people who at one point did meet the scriptural requirements but are now struggling with backsliding.

Pray for your leadership to hold the line and stay the course of Biblical mandates for leadership.

Father I pray that you would surround our elders with grace to be men above reproach, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not given to argument or fighting, not fond of sordid gain, but help them to be hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, and self-controlled. Empower them to hold fast to Your faithful Word so that they will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. (Titus 1:7-9)

7. Pray for equipping.

My husband and I both went to seminary. I wanted to be an equipped helpmate for him. For all the seminary lectures, conferences, and years of experience, there are still moments when I come to a juncture and have to return to my Lord for more equipping.

While that sounds fine and good, in a moment of intensity, it doesn't always feel good or easy to realize you don't have the tools for a situation. These are good times to slow down and choose to meet the Lord in your prayer closet and Bible study.

I've noticed that while serving it's tempting make a knee-jerk reaction that springs more from a perceived need for instant resolution, rather than a deep understanding or proper equipping for the dilemma.

Pray for your leaders to be equipped and to have the grace to pull back from a situation to seek out the right equipping before engaging a situation.

Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip _____ in every good thing to do His will, working in our church that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

(Hebrews 13:20-21)

8. Pray for the women of the church.

The saying goes that behind every amazing man is an even more amazing woman. Perhaps! But one thing for certain is that women play a vital role in the church.

Jesus was supported largely through women. Elijah was supported by a woman. David was guided into wisdom by a woman. Paul took time to address the relational issues between two women who served in their church because their peaceful relationship mattered so much to the overall health of the church family!

So pray for the women in your congregation to be the blessing God has called them to be.

Lord, grace and grow the women in our congregation to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips or enslaved to much wine. Put good teaching on their lips so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored. (Titus 2:3-5)

9. Pray for the fulfillment of fellowship.

We live in a culture that increasingly struggles to connect. It isn't only apparent in the church. It's in schools and 4H clubs. It's in workplaces and community centers. Organizations that flourished 20 years ago, now struggle to find people with enough passion or time to commit.

Of course organizations need to adapt to a changing world, but if 20 years ago people were able to sit for 30 minutes around a dinner table to share life with their own flesh and blood — and now they are too busy for even that —it's no wonder no one can find time for the rest of it.

Fellowship is a special, sacred facet of the church. It's the notion of family. Of belonging. Jesus gave it to us when He referred to us as His brothers and sisters and gave us the right to call God our Abba. In a culture where families are so often shattered, and connection happens through screens and devices, we must prayerfully protect the fellowship of the church.

Pray for it to be effective! Pray for it to be real and deep and joyful. And pray for your leadership to have opportunity to sit in the shade of friendship within their congregation as well.

We all desperately need the fellowship of our church family. Perhaps now more than ever.

Father, I pray that the fellowship of our faith would become effective through the knowledge of every good thing You've bestowed on us through our position in Christ. Bring much joy and comfort in the love we share and cause our fellowship to be a source of sweet refreshment to our entire church family. (Philemon 6-7)

10. Pray for your benefit and joy.

Your pastor or leadership team are human just like you and may require your patience as they grow through something. They grieve, their hearts get weary, they are sometimes wrong. But at the end of the day God has chosen so graciously to work through leaders as humans.

You can rest your confidence in God's design to get His agenda accomplished, even when a leader is less than perfect. When an individual rests in the Lord's design that way, instead of demanding from the leader something that even God Himself might not demand, we actually end up experiencing more fulfillment and blessing. If we are hard "sheep," we become a burden to our leaders and Scripture tells us this is no benefit to us.

Pray for yourself and your congregation to be a joy to your church leadership. Most leadership teams I've known were exceptionally encouraged and fueled forward when they felt the joy of serving. Who knows what a little extra joy might do in your church!

Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you. (Hebrews 13:17)

April Motl is a pastor's wife, home school mom, and women's ministry director. When she's not waist deep in the joys and jobs of motherhood, being a wife, and serving at church, she writes and teaches for women.