

PRAY FOR YOUR CHURCH LEADERS!

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Unspeakable weight rests on the shoulders of every under-shepherd who has the gloriously heavy duty of caring for the souls of God's blood-bought sheep. It is a duty and a call where the watchman cannot clock out or say he's uninvolved. It is a tireless work. It is a wonderful work. It is a busy work. It is a consuming work! And every minister of the gospel, called by God to such a high and holy calling, would not ultimately want to do *anything* else.

How can we pray for our church leaders? How can we hold up their arms as they engage in relentless ministry?

1. To Pursue Christ supremely. *(The pursuit of his life.)*

Make it your aim to consistently pray for your pastor-elders to "take up their cross and follow Christ" daily (Luke 9:23). As Jesus put it, he who does not take his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me (Matt 10:38). Pray for your leaders to *follow after Christ*, that is, to pursue Christ, that is to prioritize *the person of Christ* more than just *doctrine about Christ*. Ask God to give them a burning love and a supreme passion for Christ's honor and renown -- not *their own* earthly recognition and fame. Pray for your leaders to pursue Christ and so find themselves awed by the unspeakable love that Christ has shown to their souls that they would preach as men *lit on fire*! Pray that they would pursue Christ supremely whether people watch or not, whether people notice or not, whether people applaud them or not, whether they become popular or not, whether they become conference speakers or not. Pray that they'd say I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord (Phil 3.8).

2. To Proclaim Christ Boldly. *(The proclamation of his lips.)*

And as you pray for your leaders to pursue Christ, present your requests to God that this passionate pursuit of Christ would result in passionate proclamation of *Christ*. Yes, pray for your ministers to study hard and preach hard! Pray for them to pursue Jesus Christ and to preach Jesus Christ! But keep persistent in prayer for your shepherds! Proclaiming Christ boldly is urgently needed in this hour! A famine in the land exists! A famine in our country, in our culture, in our cities, *in many 'evangelical' churches*! As unpopular, or as unwanted, or as undesirable as it may be to the masses, pray for your shepherds to preach the Word -- in season and out of season! Pray that they'd reprove, rebuke, exhort and do all this with great patience. Indeed, times will come -- and are here! -- when they will not endure sound doctrine, but wanting to have their ears tickled they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths (2 Tim 4:2-4). Pray for your leaders to be unflinching, unashamed, unapologetic, unabashed in proclaiming the *excellencies of this Christ*! Pray for this to happen when the church is gathered for equipping. And also pray that your leaders would model this for the flock when the church scatters to proclaim the gospel and call sinners to flee from the wrath to come and follow after Christ wholeheartedly! Pray for men of God to arise and persevere in bold preaching!

3. To Study Christ Hungrily. *(The passion of his soul.)*

Jesus had twelve men that He chose to learn from Him, to preach with Him, to perform miracles, and to *be with Him* (Mark 3:14). It was known of the early Apostles that they had been "with Jesus" (Acts 4:13). Pray to God that your ministers would so study Christ that it would be their all-consuming passion. As someone who hasn't eaten in a day would find his stomach growling for food, may the souls of our shepherds hungrily long for Christ and the Word! Like the Apostle John, pray for your leaders to study Christ, for John spoke of His time with Christ: we have heard Him, have seen Him with our eyes, have looked at Him, and have touched Him with our hands -- this Word of Life (1 John 1:1). John went on to say: "We have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life ... which was manifested to us" (1 John 1:2). And all this so that *our joy* may be made complete (1 John 1:4). O pray for your leaders to so happily hunger for, so fervently follow after, so joyfully linger with Christ Jesus, the Lord. Pray that the ministries

and duties and meetings and responsibilities would *not* cloud out or distract him from the primary work of prayer and the ministry of the Word. Pray that your leaders would not lose their first love (Rev 2:4).

4. To Serve Christ Pastorally. *(The imitation of his Master.)*

There is an amazingly high calling that God gives to every under-shepherd to “watch over the souls” of those God has placed under their watch-care (Heb 13:17). Like a watchman, the minister of the gospel must always be looking out, alert, and on guard. He cannot become drowsy in the ministry or invaders will come when he’s not expecting. He must be vigilant to guard from Satan’s schemes. The duty of your pastor-shepherds is *soul-care*. Moreover, the writer to the Hebrews exhorts us: “let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you” (Heb 13:17b). Pray for them to serve Christ as they serve Christ’s flock vigilantly. Pray that they would tirelessly guard from false teaching, from worldly psychologies, entertainment strategies, and seeker-friendly methodologies and give themselves to what is most helpful for the souls of God’s people. Pray for God’s daily strength for them to do this. Intercede on their behalf that they would indeed watch over every *soul* that God has placed under their care to serve and to shepherd. And pray for them to do this service with joy, as to Christ, as they imitate Christ Jesus.

5. To Meet Christ Prayerfully. *(The unburdening of his soul.)*

Pray for your leaders to pray. Ask God to *meet* with them in sweet times of communion. There’s much in the life of a minister to distract him and deter him and busy him so that he doesn’t have “time” even to pour out his soul to God. But pray that God would guard him from such evils! Pray for your shepherds to unburden his soul constantly to God, his Abba Father! Like Hannah in 1 Samuel 1, who was “oppressed in spirit,” she “poured out her soul before the Lord” (1 Sam 1:15), ask God for your leaders to pour out their souls and meet Christ prayerfully in the times where they (often!) may feel oppressed in spirit! Her prayer (in 1 Sam 2) focused on the gloriously mighty and immutably comforting character of Jehovah! O let it be that we would pray for our leaders to meet Christ in prayer and rest in Christ’s unchangeableness and that this would so fortify them in hope, comfort them in distress, and gladden them in truth. Never underestimate the power of intercessory prayer! Let us pray for our pastors to pray in their praying and so receive refreshment and answers as they prayerfully labor for Christ, for conversions, and for saints!