

Spiritual Battles of a Minister:

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Before any minister is a shepherd, he first is a sheep. A man may be a leader in front of a congregation of believers but he is foremost a servant who must bow low before the Lordship of Jesus Christ. That reminds us that leaders do not stand immune to temptation and to struggles. Leaders wage war on the spiritually grueling and relentlessly intense battlefield *daily*. No greater calling exists than that of being a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ! To serve God by studying His Word, preaching His gospel, praying for His people, and shepherding Christ's blood-bought sheep comprises the most gloriously exhilarating gift God could give to a man. But nevertheless, he is still *a man*. And he still engages in daily struggles. But what are they? What is unique to the pastor of a church? What are the hardships that godly leaders face?

In this brief essay, I'll present 8 battles that every faithful minister of the gospel battles with so that you can pray for your pastor and care for him diligently and faithfully.

1. Carelessness

One battle that can invade a minister's life is that of carelessness. With enough time and with the passing of years, a man may grow to be a bit careless in his care for his own soul and for the souls of those he shepherds. Negligence can creep in. Inattentiveness can describe a busy man who has served for a while. Pray that your pastor would guard from carelessness about the work of the *Lord* and the *sheep of God* that he is called to care for.

2. Ineffectiveness

Another spiritual battle that wages war frequently in a minister's heart is the perception of his own ineffectiveness. And to be sure, all men *in and of themselves* are ineffective and unable to accomplish spiritual good. However, pastors have desires and ambitions and when those don't appear to be met, he can feel the strong weight of ineffectiveness and inefficiency. He may grow to feel useless, purposeless, and even that his labors are futile. Pray for your shepherd to be on guard against the subtle battle of and wrong thinking concerning ineffectiveness.

3. Fruitlessness

Going with the previous battle of ineffectiveness, all pastors wrestle with apparent fruitlessness of their ministries. Granted, those with small or big congregations or narrow or broad influences may still battle with this battle of feeling fruitless *because they don't see the visible fruit and results of their own labors*. Faithful men can pray and preach, study and speak, evangelize & shepherd, train up and disciple relentlessly and see, by God's sovereign design, very little *visible* fruit of his labors. This could cause him to battle greatly in his soul. Pray for your shepherd to retain a proper perspective of being faithful to God and letting Him handle the *fruit* of his work.

4. Coldness / Lukewarmness

There's not a Christian who doesn't battle with times of struggling with a cold heart and feeling lukewarm toward Christ, His gospel and His Word. Truth be told, this also happens with ministers of the gospel. As ironic as it may seem that a man may feast upon God's Word

vocationally and stand to preach its glorious truths, his human heart can still wane and grow cold toward Christ and His glory from time to time. Pray for your minister to prioritize a flaming love for Christ and a zealous pursuit of His Word and prayer *devotionally* before he steps into the office to do it *vocationally*. Studying and preaching is great but pray for your minister to do these duties out of a warm heart toward Christ. Pray for him to wage war against lukewarmness. Pray for him to kindle the coal of love for Christ in *private* before he stands to speak of the love of Christ in *public*.

5. Weakness

Every faithful minister understands his own weakness and inadequacy. In fact, faithful shepherds who know God's Word rightly recognize that apart from Christ and the Spirit's powerful enablement, the preacher can accomplish *nothing*. Nothing! The Evil one, however, loves to capitalize on this and implant feelings of worthlessness from the man's own weaknesses. How weak the man is to save and to sanctify, to build and to sustain the church. This truly is God's work. But a man's weakness does not mean he is useless. Pray for your pastor that in his *weakness* he would lean on *Omnipotence*. Pray that his weakness would launch him to desperate prayer and humble dependence so that in his weakness, God would use him mightily!

6. Unpreparedness

There's always more commentaries to study. More articles can be read. The sermons could often be better, outlines could be crisper and introductions and conclusions could be tighter. But the minister knows he must take his seemingly pitiful notes to the pulpit and stand and speak for God. Oh he has studied. He's gone through the text and he knows the meaning and he's done the adequate sermon preparation-work. Still, a lingering sense festers deep in his soul that he still feels unprepared to stand before God, before God's people and speak the oracles of God. So much more could be said. Perhaps it could be said better. Maybe a funeral kept him from adequate study time. Perhaps a marital conflict in his own home caused late nights and persistent distractions. Maybe grief over an unbelieving child weighed him down. Pray for your shepherd to study hard and preach the Word even in the busy seasons and unforeseen distractions.

7. Self-promotedness // Over-confidence//self confidence

Men of God affirm and quickly state that the ministry is not about them. True. But the temptation still resides deep in the hearts of pastors to be appreciated, honored and respected. At times, this could lead to self-promotion, self-pity, over-confidence and self-confidence. The temptation to be liked, to mesmerize the congregation, to attain many retweets can be a very subtle battle in the soul of the man of God. The spiritual battle rests in his emptying himself of *himself* so that he may fill himself *with God*. Pray for your minister to be confident in *the Savior*, not himself; to be ravished with God and His glory.

8. Giftedness

The battle of comparing oneself with others is very real in the ministry. Jealousy can quickly creep in and take over a man's heart. Pray for your shepherd to be thankful for the gifts that God has graciously & sovereignly given to him rather than to be jealous in comparing himself with others whom God also uses in the ministry! The measure of a man's giftedness has nothing to do with publicity or popularity but it has everything to do with the merciful grace and

decreed sovereignty of God. Pray for your shepherd to use his gifts, hone his gifts, thank God for his gifts, minister with his gifts, and glorify God to the fullest with his gifts.

A HELPFUL PURITAN PRAYER [from the Valley of Vision]:

*...My end in preaching is to know Christ, and impart His Truth;
My principle in preaching is Christ Himself, whom I trust,
for in Him is fullness of spirit and strength;
My comfort in preaching is to do all for Him.
Help me in my work to grow more humble...
to pick something out of all providences to that end,
to joy in thee and loathe myself,
To keep my life, being, soul, and body ONLY for thee
to carry my heart to thee in love and delight
to see all my grace in thee, coming from thee
to walk with thee in endearment.
Then, whether I succeed or fail, nought matters but THEE ALONE.*