

I Am First Baptist Church:
I Will Pray for My Pastors
Miscellaneous Texts

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November 10, 2013

Introduction: We return to our series called “I Am First Baptist Church.” The idea for this series comes from a book titled, *I am a Church Member*, by Thom Rainer. The book calls every church member to make 6 commitments to his or her local church. The first commitment was “I will be a functioning church member.” The idea is that as a church member, we must function within the body of Christ, using our spiritual gift. The second commitment was “I will be a unifying church member.” We discovered that at the heart of Church unity is our love for the LORD and our love for the lost. The third commitment is “I will not let my church become about me”—that is my preferences and desires.

The fourth commitment sounds easy, but requires a great deal of discipline and long-term commitment.
I will pray for my pastor (s).

I have to tell you that I tried to talk myself out of preaching this message. I mean, somebody could make the argument that it sounds rather self-serving to make the whole point of the sermon about asking others to pray for yourself.

But as I continued to seek the Lord this week, several things became crystal clear.

Why This Message?

1. Other Ministers on our Staff—We have other staff that I want you to be praying for in the same way that I will ask you to pray for me.
2. This is Biblical—The Apostle Paul asked often for the prayers of the saints.
 - Romans 15:30—Now I appeal to you, brothers, through our Lord Jesus Christ and through the love of the Spirit, to join with me in fervent prayers to God on my behalf.
 - 2 Corinthians 1:11—And you can join in helping with prayer for us...
 - Ephesians 6:19—Pray also for me, that the message may be given to me when I open my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel.
 - Colossians 4:3-4—At the same time, pray also for us that God may open a door to us for the message, to speak the mystery of the Messiah, for which I am in prison,⁴ so that I may reveal it as I am required to speak.
 - 1 Thessalonians 5:25—Brothers, pray for us also.
 - 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2—Finally, brothers, pray for us that the Lord’s message may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you,² and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not all have faith.
3. Fear—The more I looked at this topic, the more fearful I became and the more I realized how desperately I need your prayers.

Listen to these fearful statistics:

- 1,700 pastors leave the ministry each month due to moral failure, spiritual burnout or contention in their churches.
 - 50% of pastors are so discouraged that they would leave the ministry if they could, but have no other way of making a living.
 - 70% of pastors constantly fight depression.
 - 80% believe pastoral ministry has negatively affected their families.
 - 70% say they have a lower self-image now than when they first entered ministry.
 - 40% report serious conflict with a parishioner at least once a month.
 - 90% of the pastors report working between 55 to 75 hours per week.
 - 80% of seminary and Bible school graduates who enter the ministry will leave the ministry within the first five years.
 - 70% felt God called them to pastoral ministry before their ministry began, but after three years of ministry, only fifty percent still felt called.
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- 80% of pastors' spouses wish their spouse would choose another profession.

4. The Health of the Church—We cannot be healthy as a church in the long-term if I and the rest of our staff are not healthy spiritually.

“It is at a fearful expense that ministers are ever allowed to enter the pulpit without being preceded, accompanied, and followed by the earnest prayers of the churches. It is no marvel that the pulpit is so powerless, and ministers so often disheartened when there are so few to hold up their hands. . . . When the churches cease to pray for ministers, ministers will no longer be a blessing to the churches.” Gardiner Spring (1785-1873)

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.”

So, at the risk of sounding selfish, can I point you in the direction of a guide for praying for your pastors? Many Scriptures could give us direction for praying for pastors. In fact, I keep handwritten in the front cover of my Bible a list of Scriptures that I think on and pray regularly for myself as reminders of who I ought to be and how I ought to preach. I want to share two passages with you this morning that have especially touched my heart. One gives us a model for praying for the pastor’s personal life; the other gives a model for praying for the pastor’s public life.

Pray for Your Pastor’s Personal Walk with God!

Isaiah 66:1-2—This is what the LORD says:

Heaven is My throne,
and earth is My footstool.
What house could you possibly build for Me?
And what place could be My home?
² My hand made all these things,
and so they all came into being.
This is the LORD's declaration.
I will look favorably on this kind of person:
one who is humble, submissive in spirit,
and trembles at My word.

The Context: God is saying two things in this passage. First, man cannot build a place that can contain the glory of God. His throne is Heaven and earth is His footstool. So, don't try. Second, after establishing this fact, God does however say that His power can only be made manifest when certain conditions take place. The conditions are not met in the external nature of buildings, but in the internal heart of those who would be willing to meet certain conditions.

The Conditions in which God's favor rests:

1. In those with humble and contrite hearts
2. In those who tremble at God's Word

In relationship to your pastors' personal lives, we must pray for these two conditions!

Pray for Your Pastor's Public Ministry (Ezra 7:8-10)

Ezra came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, during the seventh year of the king. ⁹ He began the journey from Babylon on the first day of the first month and arrived in Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth month since the gracious hand of his God was on him. ¹⁰ Now Ezra had determined in his heart to study the law of the LORD, obey it, and teach its statutes and ordinances in Israel.

Only when you have prayed for your pastor's personal life should you begin to pray for his public life. If he has no **credibility in his personal life, he has no substance in his public life**. Notice that this is the first thing in the description of Ezra's life.

1. Pray that God's hand will be upon your pastor.
Ezra 7:9 "The gracious hand of his God was on him."

The hand of God being upon your pastor goes back to the principles of praying for his personal life.

2. Pray that He will be disciplined to study the word.
Ezra 7:10 "determined in his heart to study the law of the Lord."
3. Pray that He will live the word.
Ezra 7:10 "obey it"
4. Pray that He will have the ability to teach the word to others.

Ezra 7:10 “and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel.”

Nehemiah 8:8 “They read from the book, from the law of God, translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading.”

A Few Practical Suggestions:

1. The Men’s Pastor’s Prayer Group
2. Pray 5 minutes a day
3. 31 Day Prayer Guide Resource by Nancy Leigh DeMoss found at www.reviveourhearts.com/articles/31-days-of-praying-for-your-pastor/