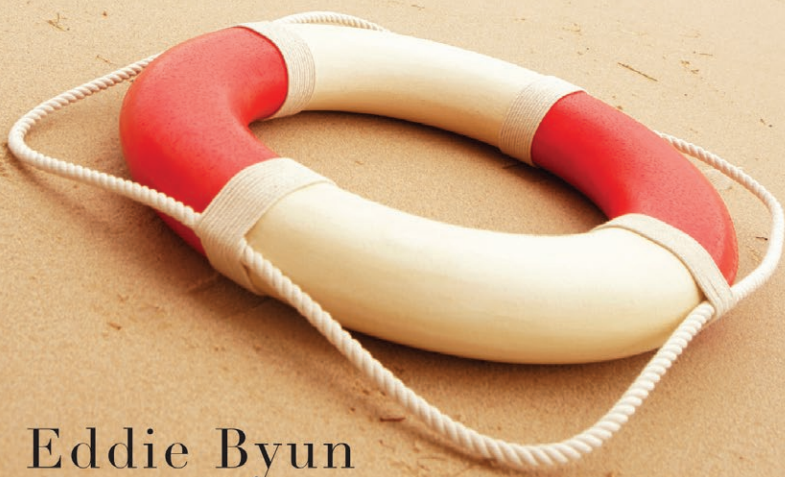


# PRAYING FOR YOUR PASTOR

HOW YOUR PRAYER SUPPORT  
IS THEIR LIFE SUPPORT



Eddie Byun

Foreword by Chip Ingram

Taken from *Praying for Your Pastor* by Eddie Byun.  
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Downers Grove, IL. [www.ivpress.com](http://www.ivpress.com)



# INTRODUCTION

## WHY PASTORS NEED INTERCESSORY PRAYER

I urge you, brothers and sisters, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me.

**Romans 15:30 NIV**

Although fifteen years have passed, I still remember that Sunday as if it were yesterday. I was the guest speaker for a church, and at first there was nothing particularly unusual about the church service or its people that caught my attention. The ushers in red vests were guiding people to their seats, the praise team had just finished their final sound check and friends were giving hugs to each other as they caught up on the past week. But after the opening praise and speaker introduction, I looked up at the congregation and saw something I had never seen during a Sunday service before—a row of people in the back of the sanctuary with arms lifted up. It was their prayer team, and they were interceding for me!

While I had received prayer plenty of times from churches before, I had never seen prayer teams lifting up their hands to pray for me throughout the entirety of my sermon. It was one of the

most encouraging things I had ever experienced. This gesture of support was surprising because forty minutes is a long time to hold up your hands! It was so encouraging that it made me want to keep on preaching, but then they might have ended up praying for me to end my sermon instead!

Their hands lifted in prayer reminded me of how Moses also lifted up his hands as he prayed for Joshua and the Israelite army in their fight against the Amalekites in Exodus 17. As long as Moses' arms were lifted, Israel would be winning, but when his arms got tired and he lowered them, they would be losing. So as Moses became tired, Aaron would lift up one of Moses' arms and Hur would support the other until the victory was complete. That was a picture of the power of intercessory prayer, especially for those who are on the frontline of spiritual battle. It was a picture of how we are to intercede for the spiritual leaders in our lives.

This is something I hope more pastors can experience as a result of this book. We all know it's important to pray for our spiritual leaders, but we want our motivation to pray to be grounded in God's Word for us. So what are the reasons we pray for our pastors?

## The Reason We Pray

First of all, God calls the church to pray for her leaders. The church has a vital role to play in the strengthening and supporting of its pastors through prayer. Paul understood the importance of this intercessory relationship, so he frequently asked the churches to pray for him. One example of this is found in Romans 15:30 (NIV): "I urge you, brothers and sisters, *by our Lord Jesus Christ* and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me" (emphasis mine). Paul is asking for the church in Rome to pray for a successful journey for his ministry in Jerusalem. The basis of

our prayers is to be grounded in the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have access to the Father in heaven, through prayer, because of what Jesus did on the cross. Jesus made a way for us to have *access* and *adoption* into the arms of our Father in heaven.

What distinguishes Christian praying from all other praying is that we are not trusting in our work of prayer, but we are trusting in the work of Christ to be the means through which we can gain access to the Father. That is why we pray in *Jesus'* name. It is through Jesus that our prayers are heard, and it is by his grace that our prayers are answered.

Then Paul says in Romans 15:30, "I urge you, brothers and sisters, by our Lord Jesus Christ and *by the love of the Spirit*" (emphasis mine). Another reason we pray is out of love for one another. For the Christian life, love is to be the motive for everything we do. "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). One of the best ways to love each other is by praying for each other. And one of the best ways to love your pastors is by praying for them.

So true Christian prayer is grounded in the work of Christ, motivated by the love that comes through the Spirit. Paul finishes off the passage in Romans 15:30 saying, "to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me." This phrase "join me in my struggle," or as the English Standard Version says, "strive together," carries with it the idea of wrestling, as when Jacob wrestled with God at Bethel in Genesis 32. Yes, sometimes prayer is a time to rest, but other times, prayer is a time to wrestle.

Paul is saying, "Wrestle with me, and wrestle for me through prayer!" He's saying, "Fight with me! And fight for me!" In the spiritual warfare we are in, we are called upon to fight for the greater blessings and breakthroughs. That is intercessory prayer! It

is a fight. It is wrestling. Because we are in a war. Do you realize that God calls the church to not just pray for pastors but to fight for them in prayer?

Paul also reminds Timothy that we must pray for our leadership: “First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, *for kings and all who are in high positions*, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way” (1 Timothy 2:1-2, emphasis mine). He urges Timothy to lift up supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving for all, especially for our leaders.

Pray for their leadership because how you bless your leaders in prayer will be directly connected to how you are blessed through their leadership. There is a direct correlation between how you bless your leaders in prayer and how God will bless you through their leadership. So he says, “I urge you! Pray for them!”

My first pastoral position out of seminary was at Handong Global University, an international Christian university located in Pohang, South Korea. I was hired to oversee the international student body as a pastor and a chaplain. One thing I didn’t know at the time of my hiring was that I was also to be part of another pastoral team that was headed by a Korean minister, Pastor Kim. Pastor Kim is one of the nicest people you will ever meet in your life. He is always smiling, always hugging people he meets, and very soft-spoken. But as an arrogant young American straight out of seminary, I wasn’t interested in mingling with the Korean pastoral team because I was hired to oversee the international student ministry. As nice as Pastor Kim was, I preferred spending time with the English-speaking students or using that time to prepare for my sermons or Bible study lessons. Pastor Kim would give subtle hints here and there, saying that it would be great if I could be at this

pastoral gathering or that fellowship in order to get to know the other staff better. The little appreciation I had for his kind gesture slowly turned into resentment toward him. I would think, “Doesn’t he get it yet? Doesn’t he know that it’s wasting my time? Time that could be better spent preparing for *my* work? I wasn’t hired to mingle with the Koreans; I was hired to take care of the English speakers!” That negative attitude started to poison my thoughts toward him in our staff meetings and even in our chapel services. I began to see everything he said to me as criticism and brushed it off using the excuse that he didn’t understand my culture.

Thankfully, the Holy Spirit stepped in and threw some cold water in my face during one of my usual pity parties. I felt the conviction of the Spirit telling my heart that this attitude against Pastor Kim was a sin and I needed to repent of it. So instead of complaining about him, God was telling me to pray for him. I began to thank God for him, and asked that God would give Pastor Kim greater wisdom and sensitivity to the Spirit to lead our staff in a way that honored Jesus. Several days after I started praying blessings for Pastor Kim, I noticed something changing in the way I saw him. He was no longer a thorn in my side, but I saw him as a humble, beloved child of God—someone that Jesus was deeply passionate about. Not only did my view of him change, but how I received his words for me also began to change. I began to get blessed when he shared about his devotionals and preached in chapel. God was changing my heart toward Pastor Kim as I prayed for him. As a result, both Pastor Kim and I were getting blessed by my prayers for him. I covered him with blessings, and my heart was getting changed by blessings. Everyone benefits when we pray for our pastors. Everyone.

Let’s look further into the reasons why pastors need our intercessory prayers.

## So Why Do Pastors Need Our Prayers?

***Pastors face greater accountability.*** They will face a stricter judgment and are held to a higher standard. James 3:1 says, “Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.” Teachers here would be the equivalent of rabbis in the Jewish communities, the spiritual leaders, the teachers—basically the pastors of their day. James is saying think twice about this role of pastor because there will be a stricter judgment that comes with it.

Why will there be stricter judgment? Pastoral ministry involves speech, and James reminds us of how hard it is to control the tongue. It is difficult to use our speech well for God’s glory. We are quick to gossip, judge and even curse others with our words. “A restless evil” is how James describes our tongue (James 3:8). “Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be” (James 3:10 NIV). And with greater visibility as a teacher, there will be greater responsibility because there is greater influence. Luke 12:48 teaches us, “Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him *to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more*” (emphasis mine). Because pastors are entrusted with more responsibility through their teaching and influence, more will be required of them.

In Luke 17:1-2 Jesus gives a warning: “And he said to his disciples, ‘Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin.’” Jesus tells us that sin will happen and temptations will happen, but then he says “woe to



the person who influences others to sin!” That is why a commitment to teaching Scripture faithfully is so important. That is why the core message of the gospel must never be compromised. We must call sin what it is, but also declare the grace of Jesus that came for sinners. With greater responsibility comes greater accountability.

I was in South Korea on April 16, 2014, when the Sewol ferry tragedy happened. The ferry was carrying 476 people from Incheon to Jeju Island when it suddenly capsized and 304 people died, most of them students from Danwon High School in Ansan City. It was a horrific accident that still grieves the nation to this day. Within days after this incident, the police and investigators began doing a systematic check to find out who was responsible, and arrests were made. The captain had been one of the first to leave the ship, and the crew also quickly abandoned it. The owner of the ship was also questioned. One by one, those with more responsibilities were held to higher levels of accountability.

In some ways, the pastor of a congregation is like a captain on a ship. Pastors are not more important than the rest of the congregation, but they do hold a weightier level of accountability before God because of their responsibilities. In the end, when we all stand before God, it is the ones in leadership who must give an account for the ministry that they are a part of. That is why pastors are in great need of your prayers and support. Hebrews 13:17 says: “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.” It is difficult to lead. It is lonely to lead. So it’s important to support those who lead!

***Pastors face greater attacks.*** Another crucial reason pastors need our intercessory prayers is because pastors will face greater attacks.

First Peter 5:8-9 says, “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.” Peter says we must be clear in our thinking, realizing that there is a spiritual battle we are in and that the devil is out to devour and destroy God’s people. Peter Wagner says, “Make no mistake about it: The higher up you go on the ladder of Christian leadership, the higher you go on Satan’s hit list.”<sup>1</sup> It is clear that the enemy is more specific, persistent and intentional when it comes to attacking spiritual leaders.

Much of the content for this book was originally a sermon series I did for my congregation. I wanted to do this series so that the church would increase its prayers for me and know how to pray for me more effectively. The comment I got most often was that people didn’t realize pastors needed prayer. As strange as it may sound, they thought that since pastors were the spiritual leaders of the church, they were the most mature and therefore the least in need of prayers. And that may be what some of you have been thinking as well. You may have thought that your pastor is a spiritual giant who walks so closely with God that all demons flee his or her presence. Well, I’m sure your pastors *are* very spiritual and have a good walk with the Lord, but although they may be spiritual, they are also very human. And being human, they are also very weak, frail and susceptible to temptations from the enemy. Your pastors need your prayers.

An interesting aftermath for me in the course of writing this book was that I too fell victim to toxic congregation members (which I will explain in further detail in chapter four). A few church members who were disgruntled and uncomfortable by our

pursuit of justice for trafficking victims and other vulnerable people in our communities did their best to push me out of the church. And it worked. I was hurt. I was burned out. I felt so betrayed. But ultimately I needed to remember that this was spiritual warfare. So I am writing this during my sabbatical, as a pastor recovering from burnout, but also recovering from some of the spiritual attacks that come with being a shepherd over souls. There is clearly warfare for every pastor who seeks to do the will of God, and each of those pastors is in need of prayer.

If you take a look at the way pastors are struggling, according to a survey done by the Schaeffer Institute, you will realize that they are under heavy attack by the enemy.

Here are some of the findings:<sup>2</sup>

- 90 percent of the pastors report working between 55 to 75 hours per week.
- 90 percent feel they are inadequately trained to cope with the ministry demands.

On their health and well-being:

- 70 percent of pastors constantly fight depression.
- 50 percent of pastors feel so discouraged that they would leave the ministry if they had another job lined up right away.

Concerning their marriages and family:

- 80 percent believe pastoral ministry has negatively affected their families.
- 80 percent of spouses feel the pastor is overworked.
- 80 percent of spouses feel left out and underappreciated by church members.

### On church relationships:

- 40 percent report serious conflict with a parishioner at least once a month.
- The number one reason pastors leave the ministry is that church people are not willing to go the same direction and support the goal of the pastor; pastors believe God wants them to go in one direction but the people are not willing to follow.

### On longevity:

- 50 percent of ministers starting out will not last five years.
- Only 1 out of every 10 ministers will actually retire as a minister in some form.
- Over 1,700 pastors left the ministry every month last year (and this is just in the United States!).
- Over 1,300 pastors were fired by the local church each month, many without cause.

Chances are, the pastors you know are tired, beaten up and feeling very discouraged. The late Peter Drucker, one of the leading management authors of our generation, once said he believed church leadership roles to be the most difficult and taxing in existence. He said bluntly, “The business world is much easier than the church.”<sup>3</sup> One reason is because in business you can go home and leave your work there, but in ministry, you are on call in your role as a minister 24/7, 365 days a year. That leads to extremely high stress levels. Pastors are pulled in many directions and are expected to be experts in almost every field of study. Realizing the high expectations placed upon them, but also having feelings of inadequacy, many experience discouragement and depression. All in all, there is an all-out attack against pastors in this generation like never before.

***Pastors are more effective with intercessory prayer.*** The things we discussed so far can be overwhelming to think about, but thankfully that's not the whole story. On an encouraging note, another reason why pastors need intercessory prayer is because pastors will become more effective with our prayer support. Second Thessalonians 3:1-2 says, "Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you, and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith." In these verses, Paul asks for prayer so that his ministry will be more effective. He says, pray for us so that the Word of God may spread, and as it spreads, people will receive it and honor it. Because he knows that prayer makes an impact on the effectiveness of his ministry, he asks the Thessalonians to pray for him. Ministries and ministers that are covered in prayer are more effective for the kingdom.

Prayer releases God's presence in a special way: it releases God's power upon those prayed for, and it releases God's purposes into the world. There are only things to be gained when we pray. For the church, it's a win-win situation. When pastors are well prayed for, their leadership is more effective, the ministry is more fruitful and, as a result, *you* get blessed too!

A fascinating study on intercessory prayer for the pastor was done several years ago in which a group of intercessors who were trained through Iverna Tompkins Ministries of Scottsdale, Arizona, agreed to intercede fifteen minutes a day for one of the 130 leaders in their area for an entire year. These were some of their findings at the end of the study:

- About 89 percent of the pastors surveyed who received these prayers indicated that the increased amount of intercessory

prayers for their lives and ministry had caused a positive change in their ministry's effectiveness.

- The pastors also said they experienced greater effectiveness in the use of their particular spiritual gifts, a higher level of positive response to their ministry, more discernment and wisdom from God, increased wholeness and completeness in Christ, improved attitudes, more evidence of the fruit of the Spirit, better personal prayer lives and heightened leadership skills.<sup>4</sup>

And the research also uncovered a very important variable. They discovered that daily prayer for leaders was more effective than weekly or monthly prayer. It became clear that increased prayer resulted in increased effectiveness in ministry. Prayers make a difference in the lives of pastors and churches! Your daily prayers will only have a positive effect on your pastors, your congregation and your ministries. Prayers are powerful. Prayers make a difference. Prayers will bless others through you, and those blessings will come back to you.

I often tell my congregation, "Your prayer support is my life support." Someone who has been rescued from drowning or is recovering from a serious injury like a gunshot wound may need to be put on life support for a period of time. The injured person doesn't have the strength to keep going by himself, so he needs the help of something outside of himself in order to allow his body to rest and to be strengthened to health again. In many ways, the pastor is under a wide range of attacks from the enemy. The attacks may come in various forms, such as gossip, criticism, slander, sickness or even threats. There are days when your pastor feels emotionally burned out, physically exhausted and spiritually weak. She feels she just can't go on. These experiences are far too common

and come far too frequently. These are the times when pastors need the life support of our prayers to keep them going. You may not know the struggles your pastors face today, but you can know that your prayers will make a difference in their lives.

## Lifting Up PRAYERS for Your Pastor

In order to help people remember the topics to pray for concerning their pastors, I've used the acronym PRAYERS as a guide. P stands for protection, R stands for rest, and so forth. Each topic is expanded on and explained in a chapter of this book. I hope this tool will serve as a memory aid so that you will be able to pray for your pastor throughout your day and during your times of personal devotion.

I've also included discussion questions at the end of each chapter so you can use this book in small groups. I encourage you to get all the small groups in your church to use this book to help increase prayer support for your pastors. I have also included prayer points at the end of each chapter to help guide your prayers after learning about the particular prayer topic for that chapter. Please intercede through these prayer topics after reading each chapter. My desire is for you to apply what you have learned right away so that it doesn't simply become head knowledge, but leads to life change. And finally, each chapter also concludes with an "action plan"—something that you or your church can implement right away as a means of practical application to strengthen the support for your pastor.

I believe many lives and ministries will be changed, saved and blessed through the prayers lifted up as a result of this book. So let's begin this journey to become faithful intercessors for our pastors today. And don't forget:

***"Your prayer support is my life support."***

—*Discussion Questions*—

- Was there anything that surprised you in this chapter about how difficult life is for pastors?
- In what ways will you seek to increase your prayers for your pastors?
- In what ways can you encourage others to commit to praying for your pastors? Brainstorm ideas in your small group and cover those ideas in prayer.

—*Prayer Points*—

- Ask God to give you his heart for your pastors as you pray.
- Ask God to increase intercessory prayer in your church.
- Ask God to raise up more intercessors in your ministry who will commit to praying daily for your pastors.

—*Action Plan*—

- Commit to praying for your pastor each day from now on.
- Encourage your small group and other small groups to go through this study together.
- Assign a person to get regular updates and prayer requests from your pastor and share them with the church.
- Set up a Facebook page where people can find prayer requests for your pastor, and encourage people to write out their prayers in order to encourage your pastor.





# PRAY FOR PROTECTION

Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

**Ephesians 6:11-17**

There's a legendary story of a pastor who was boarding an airplane and, as he usually did, he looked forward to striking up a conversation with those next to him. And if the opportunity was there, he'd share the gospel. On this particular flight, as he grabbed his seat, the person next to him was already seated. The pastor sat down and was about to introduce

himself to his neighbor but saw that he was praying. His eyes were closed, he was mumbling the prayer to himself and in his hands he had a list of names. Pleasantly surprised, the pastor thought to himself, “Oh, nice, I’m next to a Christian on this flight, and he’s a man of prayer!”

As the plane took off, the man praying opened his eyes. The pastor finally had the chance to introduce himself and said, “Hi! I noticed you were praying, so I didn’t want to disturb you before. I’m a Christian too! What church do you go to?” The man replied, “The Church of Satan, and I’m a leader there. I just finished praying through this list of pastors in our neighborhood . . . that they would all fall.”



Variations of this story have been circulating for years, and it’s probably not true. Even so, every time I hear it my heart is burdened to pray for the pastors in my life. It is a reminder for me of the great warfare pastors are under. My heart breaks when I hear a news story of another pastor who has fallen morally. Not only does my heart break, but my heart grows fearful, knowing that that story could also be mine one day. The warfare is real, and there is an enemy out there who seeks to steal, kill and destroy. That is why I have written this book as a call to the church to rise up and faithfully intercede for the spiritual leaders and shepherds in our lives. They face intense warfare, and in this generation that spiritual warfare is only increasing.

Bill McRae is the former president of a prestigious evangelical institution near Toronto, Canada. Previously he pastored the North Park Community Chapel in London, Ontario. He reported this while he was a pastor:

“It was brought to our attention that a group of satanists who worshipped in a church situation within London had committed themselves to pray to Satan for the elimination of a number of our evangelical leaders in the city through marriage and family breakdown. During that summer the cell group in London was honored at a particular satanist convention for being so effective and successful during that year.”

Why did they win the award? McRae says, “In the course of the previous year they had succeeded through their prayers to Satan in eliminating five of our very significant leading men from pastoral ministries through immorality and marriage breakdown!”

He goes on to say that he was deeply involved with one of the pastors who was going through this nightmarish and disgraceful fall from Christian ministry. “We were very much aware of the desperate need for prayer, but I must frankly confess none of us was quite as alert to the reality of the satanic warfare we were fighting until it was over.”<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately people often realize too late that serious prayers were needed—the damage has already been done. We begin this chapter with one of the most important prayers to pray for your pastors: to pray for protection. But how specifically should you pray for this?

## Pray for Protection Against Temptation

First of all, we need to pray against temptation for our pastors. Luke 22:40 says, “And when he came to the place, he said to them, ‘Pray that you may not enter into temptation.’” In this verse, we see that Jesus is engaged in serious spiritual warfare. He is on the

Mount of Olives. He is about to face the cross. He is about to die. He is quite literally at the greatest crossroads in history. So he asks his closest disciples to pray with him while his soul is in anguish. The enemy, hard at work, wants to take down Jesus and destroy the disciples. Jesus revealed to Peter earlier that Satan had asked to sift him like wheat. The disciples will be tempted to deny and betray Jesus. Satan is working hard to bring down Christ and his followers. So what does Jesus say? He says, “Pray! Pray that you won’t fall into temptation.” Also in the Lord’s Prayer he teaches us to pray, “Lead us not into temptation.”

*Jesus is revealing that prayer plays a vital role  
in protecting us against temptation.*

Prayer can release the power of God and the grace of God into our lives to overcome temptation. Therefore, pray for your pastors to be protected from temptation.

For the past few decades, there has been an epidemic of fallen pastors all over the world. The top reasons pastors drop out of ministry are burnout, moral failure and church conflict. The lure of money and the lust of the flesh have disqualified far too many pastors from continuing on in ministry. The pastoral position has one of the highest rates of stress and high expectations, but it is also one of the loneliest and most difficult professions.

Shawn always struggled with viewing porn ever since he found his older brother’s stash of magazines when he was in the fourth grade. After becoming a Christian his freshman year in high school, Shawn thought his porn addiction would just go away. It didn’t. It was his secret that he was able to keep hidden even after graduating from seminary. He was even able to keep his secret hidden from his wife for the first seven years of his marriage. What he didn’t

imagine was how stressful pastoral ministry would be and what kind of strain it would place on his marriage. He began viewing porn as his source of escape each time he felt the stress from a critical church member or after another argument with his wife. But it was torment for him. He knew it was sin. He hated himself afterwards, but he just couldn't stop himself. As the pressures from ministry increased, so did his risks in viewing porn, even in his church office.

One day, after reading a couple of emails from people who complained about his sermon from the past Sunday, he decided to visit a website to relieve his stress. What he wasn't expecting was a visit from James, an elder who worked for a computer software company. Earlier that week, James felt led by God to install some privacy software that would block spam, porn sites and other websites that might cause a distraction to the church staff. James walked into Shawn's office, and with a shocked look in his eyes, Shawn desperately scrambled to close the website window that he was looking at. But right at that moment, Shawn's computer screen froze. Nothing worked. His mouse cursor didn't move and neither could he. James looked at Shawn's face, which looked like a deer frozen in the headlights, asked if he was okay and walked over beside him. James looked at Shawn's computer screen and then into Shawn's eyes, and both of them said at the same time, "Oh no."

Unfortunately for Shawn, this discovery ended his marriage. His wife was too shocked and embarrassed to talk to anyone at church, and she left him. But thankfully, James chose to stick by his side and connected Shawn to a Christian counselor, with whom he is still meeting to this day. It began a much needed journey of looking at his demons—demons from his past, demons that speak into his mind when he is stressed—but also looking at the spiritual warfare

that increased in his life after starting his pastorate in that church seven years ago.

This is not a rare story for those who are in church leadership. And this is not the only kind of warfare that pastors face. Here are some more stats that look at the struggles our pastors face:

- 70 percent of pastors said they have no close person to confide in.
- 90 percent work more than fifty hours a week and feel their work never ends.<sup>2</sup>
- 54 percent of pastors said they had viewed porn within the past year.
- 50 percent of pastors' marriages will end in divorce.
- 40 percent said they had an affair since starting ministry.
- 70 percent fight depression.<sup>3</sup>

These are just a small part of the reasons why 1,500 pastors leave the ministry each month. This is a clear message to the church that we must pray for our pastors, who face great warfare and temptations.

How are all these factors connected? High stress, high warfare and high isolation lead to high levels of personal temptation. In 2014, Bob Coy, who was the senior pastor of the eighteen-thousand-member Calvary Chapel in Fort Lauderdale, stepped down from his role due to moral failure. He was in the top fifteen sermon podcast downloads on iTunes and was one of the most influential preachers in America. But he joins three other megachurch pastors just within Florida who have had a ministry failure within a one-year timespan. Other high-profile pastors are now under scrutiny for their lavish use of money on large homes, expensive cars and even private planes.

There are great temptations that must be fought in the spiritual realm . . . on our knees. And the principle we learn from these verses is this: *the more we pray for our pastors, the more protected they will be!* But the less we pray for our pastors, the less covered they will be, the less protected they will be and the more vulnerable to attack we all will be. There is a direct correlation between prayers and protection. Therefore, cover your pastors in prayers of protection against temptation.

Some people find it hard to think like this, but pastors are fully human, fully frail and fully sinners, just like you. We are all saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Pastors need your prayers.

### Pray for Protection Against Evil

Another way to pray prayers of protection for our pastors is to pray against evil. Second Thessalonians 3:1-2 says, “Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you, and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith.” Paul asks for prayers of protection so that he would be delivered from wicked and evil people. Why does he say to pray for protection for him against those who don’t have faith in Christ? He asks for this because how we respond to the gospel determines how we treat others. People who love the gospel will love those who declare the gospel. But those who are hostile to the gospel will be hostile to preachers of the gospel. Jesus reminds his followers that if the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated him first (John 15:18).

The hostility toward the gospel is only growing in this generation. In the United States now, if you say you’re a Christian, you will be

looked down on and told to keep your beliefs to yourself (at best). And in the name of tolerance, you are allowed to believe and practice just about anything you want . . . except Christianity. We are now in a post-Christian or, more accurately, an *anti-Christian* world. So that means we will be hated because we love Jesus.

Most of the hundreds of Nigerian girls who were kidnapped and threatened to be trafficked by Boko Haram in 2014 were Christians, and the kidnappers say they have been successfully converted to Islam. Also in the news last year, a twenty-six-year-old, pregnant Sudanese woman faced death by hanging for being a follower of Jesus and for marrying a Christian man. This is the direction our world is headed in. So we must pray for protection against the evil that is growing in our world, because those who hate God will hate the people of God. And that is why in the Lord's Prayer Jesus also teaches us to pray, "deliver us from evil."

While I was pastoring in South Korea, God led our church to begin pursuing justice for some of the many women and children who are in vulnerable situations, such as sex-trafficked victims and orphans. I simply obeyed by beginning ministries that would address these issues, but I never realized how intense the warfare would be in my life. The fight to end sex trafficking in South Korea is heavy in spiritual warfare. There are about one million South Korean women and children in sex slavery in Korea. One study by the group Ecogender found that there are an estimated ten million customers who visit these illegal sex services each year, 80 percent of which are married men. South Korean men are the number-one group of child-sex tourists for every country in Southeast Asia. It is a multibillion-dollar industry, and deep levels of corruption perpetuate this sin. There is great evil that is controlling this industry, and they don't like people trying to get in their way.



These staggering statistics blew me away and only confirmed in my heart the need for the church to become involved in the fight against these social evils. It led me to write my first book, *Justice Awakening*, to help mobilize the global church to rise up and lead the fight to end human trafficking and modern-day slavery. While there was much fruit that came out of these years of pursuing justice, they also included some of the most intense seasons of spiritual warfare I had ever faced. This period led me to preach a sermon series on praying for your pastor and ultimately to the writing of this book.

### Pray for Protection Against the Enemy

One danger of hearing about these evils is that we can easily begin demonizing the people who are involved. But before we do that, we need to remember where the real source of attack comes from, and because of this, we need to pray for protection against the enemy.

Ephesians 6:11-13 says,

Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

Paul reveals in Ephesians 6 that the real source of our conflicts is not other people, but it is other principalities in the spiritual realm. So while we do need to pray against evil, we ultimately need to pray against the work of the enemy. The enemy's goal is to discredit, to destroy and to bring to death the spiritual leaders in the church.

First Peter 5:8 reminds us, “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” Be alert and realize that there is an enemy seeking ways to take you out, and especially your leaders. In every battle, the top prize is to capture and take out the leader of the opposition, because if you can take out the leader, the rest will be easier to deal with.

We need to be aware that the enemy’s aim is to attack the leaders first and with force.

As Jesus reminded the disciples, “Strike the shepherd, and the sheep . . . will be scattered” (Matthew 26:31). There was a city in South America which had seven pastors morally fall all within that one city. It led to thousands upon thousands of people leaving the church because no one could trust their church leaders anymore. There’s a big difference in the effect a fall has on a church when a congregation member fails and one in which the pastor fails. If a church member fails, people may be surprised or sad, but it probably won’t lead to masses of people leaving the church. But if the pastor fails, it impacts everyone. Non-Christians and nominal Christians may leave and never come back to a church again. The committed feel betrayed. The core is shaken, and the future is unknown for that ministry.

So pray for protection from the enemy who wants the influence of spiritual leaders to be destroyed.

C. S. Lewis wrote, “There is no neutral ground in the universe; every square inch, every split second, is claimed by God and counter-claimed by Satan.”<sup>4</sup>

As Peter Wagner reveals, “It has now become known that over the last several years Satanists, witches, New Agers, occult practitioners, shamans, spiritists and other servants of darkness have entered into

an evil covenant to pray to Satan for the breakdown of pastors and other Christian leaders. The spiritual warfare has intensified.”<sup>5</sup>

I heard of a married couple who came out of a satanic group after finding Christ, and in an interview they revealed that these groups would regularly cast spells and speak curses against the pastors in their cities.

The three areas they would focus their curses on were

- to destroy their finances
- to destroy their families
- to destroy their health

We are in warfare. And we need to pray for our leaders who are on the frontline of this battle. But we don't stay focused on the enemy, because our God is greater and Jesus has already won the victory through his death on the cross and resurrection. Satan is a defeated enemy who knows his days are numbered, but before the final days here on earth he wants to bring down as many people with him as possible. The war is still raging until Christ returns. The battle has been won, but Satan still has some bullets left in his gun and he's going to keep shooting until he's finally locked up for all of eternity.

### Pray for Protection with the Armor of God

Therefore, one more piece of advice is to pray for protection with the armor of God. It is wise to pray through Scripture and let God's Word be your guide in teaching you how to pray. And a great way to pray for your pastor's protection is by praying through the armor of God.

Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes

for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Ephesians 6:14-17)

- Pray for the belt of truth to be strong, upholding the truth of the gospel at all times. Pray for your pastors to be always bold, never compromising, living out Romans 1:16: “I am not ashamed of the gospel.”
- Pray for the breastplate of righteousness to protect their hearts from compromise.
- Pray for shoes that are ready to go with the gospel of Jesus and obey wherever God calls.
- Pray for the shield of faith to be strong. Pray for faith that will trust and treasure Christ as supreme over all circumstances and over all attacks in life.
- Pray for the helmet of salvation to protect the minds and thoughts of your leaders, that the assurance of salvation and their identity in Christ would be their joy and delight.
- And pray for a growing knowledge of and love for the Word of God, the sword of the Spirit, that the weapon of the Word would be well used in their lives.

Joyce was in China to do some teaching for an underground church and to visit a few orphanages that her church back home in San Diego was supporting. After a full weekend of teaching and training from 5 a.m. to 10 p.m., she was exhausted. She was always blessed by the underground church members’ hunger for Scripture, but the work was tiring, too. She was looking forward

to getting to her small guest room and sleeping well that night before heading back home to America the next day. She closed her eyes, rested her head on the back seat of the car and was about to doze off.

Suddenly, Joyce awoke to a flashlight beaming into her eyes. She squinted and blocked the flashlight with her hand to keep the light from blinding her. A police officer screamed at her to hand over her documents, but before she could even reach for her bag, the officer opened her car door, grabbed her arm and took her bag. She knew something wasn't right. She was now in the back seat of a police car and driving through a very rural part of a village that she'd never seen before. They finally arrived at the police station, but there was literally nothing else that could be seen for miles. They threw her into a jail cell, and in broken English the officer said, "You in big, big trouble!" Fear suddenly gripped her.

At about the same time this was happening in China, Susie, who was the prayer ministry leader for Joyce's church, woke up from her bed and felt a strong leading to begin praying for her pastor Joyce in China. She didn't know what was happening, but she felt an urgency to pray that she'd never felt before. She prayed that God would protect Joyce and asked God to provide assistance to her in this time of need. Susie quickly called several other church members and asked them to join her in prayer.

The officer threw Joyce's bag into the jail cell. She grabbed it and began looking through her bag. She realized her Bible had been taken out and that was why she was in trouble. They must have found out that she taught the Bible to the underground church, which was illegal in China. She also found her iPhone and turned it on, only to see the message, "No SIM card." They had removed her SIM card so she couldn't use her phone.

The two officers went outside to smoke as Joyce began to worry inside her cell, realizing that no one knew where she was. She checked her phone again, and still there was no SIM card and no signal for her to use. Joyce fell on her knees and began to pray, “God, please let this phone work. Please let this phone work.” Suddenly, she saw a Wi-Fi signal appear on her phone. She was in the middle of nowhere and knew this police station would not have a Wi-Fi signal. But she took it as a sign from God and began downloading an app that would allow her to make calls and send text messages. Within the next few minutes she was able to text and call several family members and leaders from her church, telling them what had happened. The church began to pray, and calls were being made.

Just as the Wi-Fi signal disappeared, the two officers returned to the building and sat at their desks. Joyce knew God had sent that Wi-Fi signal to her.

Joyce needed to get out of that cell soon because her flight back home was in six hours! She continued to pray. One hour later, the front door to the police station flew open and the director of one of the orphanages that Joyce had visited came running in. Joyce was so relieved to see her. The director had some papers in her hand that she shoved into the face of the police officer, screaming something in Chinese that Joyce didn’t understand. After about fifteen minutes of yelling, one of the police officers came to open the jail cell, and Joyce was free! He said to her, “You can go.” She came out of the cell and gave the orphanage director a huge hug. The director told Joyce the papers had proved she was in China to serve and support the orphanage and that if they didn’t let Joyce out of jail now, the director would call her father, who was a judge for the city courtroom. They left the police station, and Joyce had

just enough time to head back to her room, shower and catch her flight back home.

When Joyce got back home, she saw that the testimonies of how God called the church to pray for her and the timing of all these events were nothing short of a miracle.

Your prayers do make a difference in the lives of those who are on the frontlines of battle. May you grow to be a prayer shield for the shepherds in your life.

—*Discussion Questions*—

- Did you realize how important it was to pray for protection for your pastors before reading this chapter? What stood out to you the most?
- With the spiritual warfare that surrounds us, why would your pastor be a high target for the enemy to focus on?
- What can you and your group do to increase prayers of protection for your pastors throughout the whole church?

—*Prayer Points*—

- Pray for protection for your pastor with the points that were listed in the chapter (against temptation, evil and the enemy).
- Pray through the armor of God (Ephesians 6:14-17) for your pastor.
- Pray for an increase in intercessory prayer for your pastor.

—*Action Plan*—

- Come early before the worship service each week and commit to praying for protection for your pastor before the service begins.
- Consider coming to your church sanctuary during the week, when there is no service, to lay hands on the pulpit and ask God to be a strong wall of fire to protect the pulpit ministry.
- Organize a prayer walk that your small group can do around your church and the surrounding neighborhood. Pray prayers of protection over your church and its leadership.
- Research to see if there are local occult groups in your community, and as a small group pray that the efforts of the enemy through these groups would be bound in Jesus' name.



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