

Prayer And Care For Pastors and Their Families

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By Kim Butts

In the midst of a season when they are needed most, pastors are burning out at an alarming rate! As Christians, we should feel deep agony over this fact, especially since the main reason for it appears to be . . . us! The very Christians who comprise the congregations of pastors who are rapidly dropping out of ministry are often the cause.

God has not called us to criticize or damage our pastors. He has called us to love them (1 Cor. 13:1-13), to be submissive to their leadership (Heb. 13:17), and to pray for them (1 Tim. 2:1-2). The Father has called our pastors, and has ordained them to be our shepherds (Acts 20:28).

How can you pray effectively for your pastors and their families?

- **Make a commitment to pray for them daily.** If your pastors knew that you, your family, and others were praying for them, and for their families, each day . . . can you imagine what an encouragement that would be? Would their hearts be lifted if they knew that they could share a need or a concern with your family and you would take it to the Lord on their behalf? You know it would!
- **Pray that your congregation will allow them to minister**

in a loving and caring environment. Many pastors and their families feel very alone in the midst of their churches. Often, they don't have close friends in the congregation to whom they can go with burdens. They may feel that they can't share needs because they, of all people, should have everything together. In truth, the pastor's family is just like yours. They struggle with similar issues and problems. They desperately need others to come alongside of them and commit to fervent, continuous prayer so that the enemy won't have the opportunity to do damage.

- **Your pastor's ministry will only be as effective as the prayer that fuels it.** If you want a joyful, Spirit-filled shepherd, who confidently leads their congregation into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ, and demonstrates a passion for revival and for reaching the lost, then you must pray for them – and for their families!

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Here are some specific ways that your family can pray for your pastors and their families:

- 1. Pray that your pastors will always have a passion to know Christ more intimately.**

Prayer: Father, help our pastor(s) to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings (Phil. 3:10). Since we know of their faith in the Lord Jesus and their love for all the saints, may we never stop giving thanks for them, always remembering them in our prayers. We will keep asking that You, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, will give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that they may know You better (Eph. 1:15-17).

2. Pray that your pastors will minister out of a humble spirit.

Prayer: Lord God Almighty, would You help our pastor(s) to humble themselves before You and under Your mighty hand, so that You will lift them up (Jas. 4:10; 1 Pet. 5:6)? Guide them in what is right and teach them Your way (Psa. 25:9). May our congregation see that they are wise and understanding as shown by their good lives, and by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom (Jas. 3:13). Father, You have said that the ones You esteem are those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who trembles at Your Word (Isa. 66:2). May our pastor be such a person!

3. Pray that your pastors will minister from the Spirit's power.

Prayer: Gracious Father, may our pastor's messages and preaching come to us, not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that our faith might not rest on the wisdom of man, but upon Your power (1 Cor. 2:4-5). Help them never to depend upon their own might or power, but always upon Your Spirit, Lord Almighty (Zech. 4:6). May You, the God of hope, fill our pastor(s) with all joy and peace as they trusts in you, so that they may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:13).

4. Pray that your pastors will be persons of prayer and of the Word (Acts 6:4) in order to live a holy and pure life.

Prayer: Glorious God, we pray that our pastor(s) will seek You with all of their hearts. Help them never to stray from Your commands. May they hide Your Word in their hearts so that they will not sin against You (Psa. 119:10-11). Give them a deep desire to meditate on Your precepts and to consider Your ways. May they delight in Your decrees and never neglect Your Word (Psa. 119:15-16). Give them understanding so that they will keep your law and obey it with all of their hearts. Direct

them in the path of Your commands where they will find delight. Turn their hearts toward Your statutes and not toward selfish gain, and turn their eyes away from worthless things. Preserve their lives according to Your Word (Psa. 119:34-37).

5. Pray for the families of your pastors.

Prayer: Gracious Lord, may our pastor(s) fear You so that they will have a secure fortress that will always be a refuge for their children (Prov. 14:26). May they consistently teach their children to revere Your commands by following their example (Psa. 34:11), so that they might be blessed (Psa. 112:1-2). Help them to manage their families well so that their children will obey them with proper respect (1 Tim. 3:4-5). May husbands love their wives just as Christ loved the Church (Eph. 5:25). Help them to be considerate and respectful to their wives so that nothing will hinder their prayers (1 Pet. 3:7). May wives be respectful to their husbands, submitting to their authority as they would submit to the Lord (Ephesians 5:22). Faithful Lord, strengthen and protect our pastor(s) and their families against the attacks of the enemy (2 Thess. 3:3), and may their households always choose to serve You (Josh. 24:15).

6. Pray for protection against the schemes of the devil.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help our pastor(s) to be strong in Your mighty power. May they continually remember to clothe themselves with Your armor so that they can take their stand against the devil's schemes. Help them to remember that their struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, authorities, and powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Help them to stand their ground and to stand firm with the belt of truth buckled around their waists, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with their feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the Gospel of peace. In addition, help them to daily take up the shield of faith so that they

can extinguish all of the flaming arrows of the evil one. May they put on the helmet of salvation and use the sword of the Spirit, Your Word. Give them the desire to pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.

Help them to be continually alert, and to keep on praying for all the saints (Eph. 6:10-18). Don't let the devil establish a foothold in any area of their lives (Eph. 4:27). Help them to have a good reputation with outsiders, so that they will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap (1 Tim. 3:7). May they continually submit themselves to You, Father, and may they be self-controlled and alert in order to resist the devil, standing firm in the faith, so that the devil will flee (Jas. 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8-9). Keep them from temptation and deliver them from the evil one, Lord (Matt. 6:13).

7. Pray blessing into the life of your pastor(s) and their families:

O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer, may the words of our pastors' mouths and the meditations of their hearts be pleasing in Your sight (Psa. 19:14).

May You, O Lord, give our pastor(s) the desires of their hearts and make all of their plans succeed (Psa. 20:4).

Lord, our God, may Your favor rest upon our pastor(s) and establish the work of their hands (Psa. 90:17).

God of hope, may You fill our pastor(s) with all joy and peace as they trust in You, so that they may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:13).

Lord of peace, may You give our pastor(s) and their families peace at all times and in every way (2 Thess. 3:16).

May You, the God of peace, equip our pastor(s) with everything good for doing Your will, and may You work in them what is pleasing to You, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for

ever and ever. Amen (Heb. 13:20-21).

Becoming the Answer

Now that you have prayed for and blessed your pastor(s) and their families, here are some practical ways to care for, encourage, and show your appreciation to them:

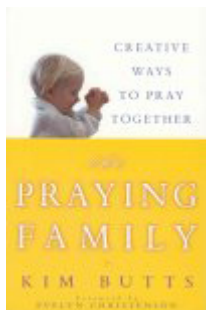
- Submit to the spiritual authority of your pastor(s) and encourage others to do the same...especially if there are any who are complaining or grumbling.
- Extend hospitality to your pastor(s) and their families by inviting them to your home for a meal or including them in family activities. Think of other creative ideas.
- Recognize that your pastor(s) and their families go through the same struggles as everyone else's families and be empathetic rather than critical.
- Give your pastor(s) and their spouses time together while you care for their children or hire someone to do so.
- Fix a meal and take it to them with an encouraging note.
- Take a basket of items you know would encourage them. Find out some things they like to snack on, or some of their favorite coffee, card games, etc.
- Find out if there are any needs in their home that need attention: leaky shower, car repairs, yard work, etc. and see that they are taken care of.
- Send notes of encouragement and appreciation from your whole family; have your children draw pictures or write their own notes.
- Recruit as many people as you can to pray regularly for your pastors and their families. Try to cover them in prayer seven days a week.
- Encourage your church leaders to send your pastor(s) on a spiritual retreat regularly so that they can be renewed and refreshed by the Holy Spirit.

Use your imagination. There are so many things you can do to

show your love and appreciation.

Be determined to pray for and care for your pastors and their families, and allow the Lord to work in and through you by encouraging other families to do the same. Your simple efforts will do much to advance the cause of Christ in your church and community, as God does a mighty work in and through your pastor(s) lives. May your prayers and those of many others in your church, along with expressions of kindness, care and appreciation, keep pastors and their families safe, joyful and productive for many years to the glory and honor of Christ Jesus, our Lord!

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