



21 DAYS
of
PRAYER
FOR YOUR CHURCH LEADERS

Lifting Up a Shield
of Intercession

STRATEGIC RENEWAL
STAFF AND BOARD MEMBERS

INTRODUCTION

I am not much of a bowler, but I know that it is virtually impossible to get a strike if the ball does not hit the headpin. Satan is a calculating and destructive enemy of God's people. He knows how essential it is to eliminate pastoral leaders to decimate the church and thwart the work of the Gospel.

Charles Spurgeon noted, "I know of no greater kindness than for my people to pray for me."

The Apostle Paul often and earnestly sought the prayers of God's people for his life and ministry (2 Cor. 1:11; Phil. 1:19; Col. 4:3; Eph. 5:19; 1 Thess. 5:25; 2 Thess. 3:1). In Romans 15:30-33, we find one of the less familiar but most powerful appeals for prayer that I want to use to prepare you for this 21-day journey.

PAUL'S WORD ON WHY, HOW, AND WHAT

As Paul wrote to the Romans (probably from Corinth), he reflected on his planned visit with them on his way to Spain. First, he planned to deliver a love gift to the persecuted believers in Jerusalem, which he had been collecting among the gentile churches. He knew his profound need for prayer support in these ministry endeavors, so he appealed to the believers to pray for him, and he offered a helpful "why, how, and what" for all those who desire to pray effectively for their spiritual leaders.

WHY WE PRAY FOR SPIRITUAL LEADERS

In Romans 15:30, Paul writes, "Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me." We see Paul's basic encouragement to pray when he says, "I beg you." The Greek "parakaleo" communicates Paul's effort to come alongside these believers, urging them to pray. But there is something even deeper here.

Paul writes, "Through the Lord Jesus Christ." Indeed, we pray only because of Christ's finished work and present intercession (Heb. 7:25; 10:20-22). Most literally, Paul is urging us here to pray because we regard Christ. The Amplified reads, "for the sake of our Lord Jesus." Your prayers for pastors and church leaders over these next 21 days must ultimately be motivated by your love and worship of Jesus Christ because it is His name, cause, and glory at stake.

Third, Paul says we should pray "through the love of the Spirit." The most literal interpretation of this phrase speaks of our love FOR the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Prayer is a vital part of supernatural power and Gospel advancement. Because we



love it when the Holy Spirit works in extraordinary ways, we should commit our hearts to praying for our leaders. The Spirit works powerfully through our prayers.

HOW WE PRAY FOR SPIRITUAL LEADERS

Paul's appeal for prayer intensifies as he continues with this urgent appeal: "Strive together with me in prayers to God for me" (v. 30). This is not a casual word about shallow, short, simple prayers. The Greek word here is *sunagonizomai*, which communicates the idea of agonizing with another person amid an intense struggle. Paul is asking them to join him in feeling the weight and warfare he is facing.

As we recommit to pray for and support our church leaders, let's ask Christ for a fresh sense of intensity. He is worthy of our passionate intercession. Our love for His Spirit's supernatural work compels us to pray. As we do so, we can feel the serious nature of the work of the Gospel and agonize in intercession for His glory.

Paul describes three specific needs that are pressing on him as he serves the Lord and travels in obedience to the call. We would do well to remember these areas of prayerful focus over the next 21 days.

WHAT WE PRAY FOR SPIRITUAL LEADERS

First, he seeks prayer for protection from spiritual enemies. He asks the Romans to pray that he might be "delivered from those in Judea who do not believe." In this context, Paul was journeying back to Jerusalem, where his most violent opponents would come against him.

He was not concerned with survival but with the satisfaction of his mission. On the one hand, Paul said, "*Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain*" (Phil. 1:20-21). Paul's prayer request was rooted in a longing to effectively finish his task, not a fear of dying. Your church leaders face unique struggles, often unspoken. They grapple with opposition from the world, the flesh, and the devil. We must pray for their protection from the schemes of the enemy.

Second, Paul asks the church to pray for the **prosperity of his ministry efforts to the saints**. He states, "...that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints." In taking funds collected from the gentiles, he faced the possibility of rejection, suspicion, or division depending on the response of the Jewish believers in Jerusalem. Today, we still need to pray for the soil of the hearts of God's people to be receptive as the Word and work of the ministry are shared by our leaders. So often, the enemy fuels misunderstanding, confusion, and criticism, undermining the fruit of Gospel ministry.



Third, Paul sought prayer to **provide for his personal needs** among the believers in Rome. After a long, demanding journey, Paul anticipated making it to Rome by God's will and with his joy intact but needing personal refreshment from the saints. Whether they speak openly about it or not, our leaders need the refreshment of encouraging words, thoughtful actions, and supportive expressions of kindness.

HIGH-IMPACT PRAYERS

Reviewing Acts 21:17 – 28:31, we find the answers to these prayers all along the way in Paul's unfolding ministry. (You can read it for yourself.) We, too, can expect outstanding answers as we join together to support our leaders in prayer.

THE PEACE THAT COMES THROUGH PRAYER

Paul's appeal for prayer ends with this benediction: "Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen." Prayer replaces worry. Prayer produces a Christ-alignment in our hearts, resulting in unity, trust, and spiritual health. For the sake of the Gospel, for the good of our leaders, and for our hearts' spiritual health, let's resolve to pray for those whom God has appointed to shepherd our souls.

We can all make a powerful difference in opposing the enemy's attacks. Samuel Chadwick wrote, "The one concern of the devil is to keep Christians from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work, and prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom, but trembles when we pray." Oswald Chambers agreed: "The prayer of the feeblest saint who lives in the Spirit and keeps right with God is a terror to Satan."

When we unite to pray for our leaders, we counteract Satan's attacks and play a vital role in advancing Christ's cause. This is our call and privilege as we join together in the 21 Days of Prayer for Church Leaders. Now, let's begin...



RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Before anyone can be a great leader, they must first learn to be an even greater follower. When it comes to ministry in the Lord's church, it is imperative to know that our first calling is not to do for Christ but instead is a call to be with Christ. For all true Gospel ministry arises out of cultivated intimacy with our Father in heaven. Consider the rhythms of our Savior. It was often said of Jesus in the gospels, "*But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray*" (Luke 5:16). It would seem as though Jesus would frequently depart from ministry opportunities in order to cultivate intimacy with His Heavenly Father and thereby receive specific ministry direction.

On one occasion, after a long day and late night in the early stages of His ministry, Jesus arose the next morning before the sun was up — not to return to the amassing needs from the prior day of ministry, but instead "*departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed*" (Mark 1:35). Even though His disciples came searching for Him, and the crowds anticipated His return, it was in that place of prayer that the Father gave to His Son the needed directions for ministry. Jesus trained His disciples in this vital paradigm when He called them in Mark 3:13-15. Notice that the progression of being with Jesus precedes ministering in the name of Jesus.

"¹³ And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him. ¹⁴ And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach ¹⁵ and have authority to cast out demons."

If this rhythm was a priority and commitment for Christ our Good Shepherd, would it not also be the case for all His undershepherds leading His church? Yet this dynamic cannot be imitated by our church leaders on their own. They need the help, support, and supernatural strength that can come to them through the prayers of God's people. So when it comes to praying for church leaders' relationship with God, here are four specific ways you can begin interceding now.

Pray that communion and fellowship with the Father will be a central priority. Within the daily trenches of needs and expectations, it can be easy to sacrifice intimacy with the Heavenly Father on the altar of ministry. Like Jesus, pray for your church leaders to guard a daily, consistent, and passionate pursuit of the Father's presence above all else. Like Paul, pray that they would even "count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil. 3:8).

Pray that their private times with the Lord would be vital, fresh, and renewing. Sometimes time with the Lord can seem dry, distracted, and dull. Even when time



is prioritized to pursue the face of God, His presence can be elusive. No doubt the Lord sovereignly uses these seasons to develop a deeper devotion and trust in His providence. Every church leader I know desires for those they are leading to encounter God's presence. Yet it can be very difficult and discouraging to minister, serve, and help others encounter God when they themselves are not. Thus, we can pray for grace for our church leaders to persevere by abiding in the love of Christ even when their private times with the Lord don't seem "productive." Additionally, pray that they would daily "*taste and see that the Lord is good*" (Ps. 34:8), and that the one thing they would ask and seek of the Lord would be to dwell in His presence, gaze upon His captivating character, and inquire of His wisdom (Ps. 27:4).

Pray that their hearts would be tender and their spirits would be sensitive to hear from God. Within the context of ministry, there is a flood of voices, perspectives, opinions, and expectations. More often than not, many of these voices come from good intentions and offer good advice. Yet, the most important and best voice to hear is God's voice. Pray that the majestic voice of God would cut through any noise or distraction and that the indwelling Spirit would give them a discerning heart to distinguish between what's good, better, and best. Pray that the Lord would speak to them through the Scriptures, through promptings of the Spirit, and within times of sweet silence before Almighty God.

Pray that they would receive personal direction and vision from God for the ministry entrusted to them. While a church leader's relationship with God is not a means to any other end, even that of ministry, intimacy with the Lord is intended to bring about God's purpose in and through His people. Like Jesus in the scene we explored earlier, pray that your church leaders would receive specific and personal ministry direction. There is never a shortage of need or of important tasks to accomplish. So pray for the Good Shepherd to guide, lead, and direct the steps of your church leaders daily so that the priorities and purposes on God's heart would be implanted and then implemented through their ministry.

In summary, what we are seeking to pray for regarding our church leaders is that Jesus would be their "first love" (Rev. 2:4) and that they would have ears to hear "*what the Spirit says to the churches*" (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). While the strength and health of a church leader's relationship with God is ultimately their responsibility and is dependent upon the Spirit, it is also your opportunity within the interdependence of the body of Christ to personally intercede for them so that intimacy with God would deepen and that they would bear lasting fruit. And you will find that as you pray for the strengthening of your church leader's relationship with God, your own communion with your Creator will be fortified so that the whole church will continue to be edified, to the glory of Christ.



RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD PRAYER GUIDE

Mark 1:35-39

Reverence: Identify and celebrate God's praiseworthy attributes

- Jesus models a consistent rhythm of prayer and communion with the Father (v. 35)
- Jesus's presence is desirable and sought after (vv. 36-37)
- Jesus is a preacher of truth and desires to reach lost people (v. 38)
- Jesus has authority over the spiritual realm (v. 39)

Prayer Prompts:

- Father, we're grateful that our greatest calling and deepest longing is to be with You, because...
- Jesus, You are worthy to be sought after because only You...
- We praise You for...(name specific church leader(s)) and how they have shown the character of Christ by...

Response: Surrender to Him and His ways

- Jesus, we admit that we allow the agenda and expectations of others to drive us when...
- Father, we confess that the distraction of...tends to crowd out prioritizing time alone with You.

Requests: Ask the Spirit to guide prayer over concerns, resources, and relationships

- Jesus, we pray that...(church leader) would hear your voice about...
- Jesus, we ask for the Spirit's anointing on...(church leader) for...
- Father, help us to encourage our church leaders' personal walk with You by...

Readiness: Encouragement and strength for spiritual battle

- Father, help our... (specific church leaders) to prioritize intimacy with you, especially when...



PRIORITIES

Let me start by clarifying what is meant by the word “priority.” I have heard Daniel Henderson describe priorities as “The commitments we put first in our lives because we believe they are important.” He goes on to describe these commitments as a way to address basic areas of one’s life focus. Not just a mere checklist of prioritizing tasks, but where we spend large portions of our time and energy. These commitments ultimately determine our goals and the way we spend our time.

I have been blessed to have mentors encourage me to maintain the correct priorities throughout my life. Over the last 15 years, they have been further developed with the help of Daniel Henderson, in his book *The Deeper Life*. The deeper life process helps the reader define priorities, which results in renewed energy to focus on our specific calling and purpose. There is relief from the guilt of not doing something that others feel is important because I have already discerned what God has deemed a priority for me.

Once priorities are clarified, goals can then be established to help align my daily schedule and prevent distractions from causing me to stray from what is important. One of the best ways I have found to ensure I stay on track is to remind myself daily of what I should be doing. In *The Deeper Life*, you are encouraged to write a Deeper Life Summary and keep it with you as a daily reminder of how God has created you and how to fulfill His purpose for your life. Daniel Henderson often says, “The power of a strong no is a stronger yes.” This process of identifying the strong yeses makes it easier to apportion my time on the items that God has called me to do.

One of my goals is to support and serve our local pastor. Based on my talents and gifts of administration and teaching, I have been able through the years to find ways to support the goals of the pastor. One simple way that I found to support and encourage our pastor was to have a monthly breakfast with him. A fair warning — some pastors may be hesitant to agree to meet at first because there is normally a personal agenda from the person. I would let the pastor know up front that the only agenda item is to help serve and support him. Over the years, these times became very special and a safe place for the pastor to relax, decompress, and clarify his priorities. I could then encourage the pastor to let me help do some of the things on his plate that I could do so that he could focus on the things that only he could do.

Regular re-evaluation of priorities is also part of the deeper life process. As each person goes through different seasons of life, they need to be open to how priorities may change. One example is how you care for your children. In my role as a father,



my priorities have obviously changed through the years as my children have grown, married, and started their own families. While my role hasn't changed, my priorities in how I serve my children have.

I have also seen my priority of serving the local pastor change as I have gone through different seasons. My heart for pastors started at an early age as I spent many Sundays with my friend from church, who happened to be the pastor's son. These experiences allowed me to see the pastor and his family as real people, not just "the pastor." I believe this set the stage for my desire to help support my pastor as I got older. This easily became a strong "yes" for me in serving the local church. What began as having a close one-on-one relationship with my local pastor eventually led to supporting and encouraging thousands of pastors through Strategic Renewal and the 6:4 Fellowship.

My guess is that the fact you are reading this book speaks to your heart for church leaders. Have you carved out time to intentionally encourage them? A simple card, note, or email letting them know you are praying for them is an easy entry point. Seek guidance in your prayers on how to encourage your leaders, and I am sure you will be a blessing to them.



PRIORITIES PRAYER GUIDE

Acts 6:1-7

Reverence: Identify and celebrate God's praiseworthy attributes

- The Lord is the one who brings supernatural growth and impact (vv. 1, 7)
- God cares and provides for the needs of His people (vv. 1-3)
- The Spirit supplies the right people and gifts to serve and edify the church (vv. 3-4)
- He is a God of unity and harmony (v. 5)
- He is worthy of our obedience and allegiance (vv. 4, 7)

Prayer Prompts

- God I thank You that when leaders prioritize prayer and the ministry of the word, then...
- Jesus, thank You for...(name church leader(s)) and how they have served us by...
- Lord, we praise You that You can bring supernatural growth and impact even when...

Response: Surrender to Him and His ways

- I confess that I tend to complain about...and help me have a new resolve to serve with wisdom so that unity can be preserved.
- God we admit our diluted priorities in...and may we have a fresh devotion to the things You say matter most.

Requests: Ask the Spirit to guide prayer over concerns, resources, and relationships

- Jesus, raise up church leaders who are devoted to prayer and the ministry of the word at...(name specific church) so that...
- Lord, may disciples of godly character, full of the Spirit and wisdom be developed in... in order that...
- Lord, we lay our hands upon...and commission them unto Your service in...
- Jesus, cause...(name those far from the Lord) to become obedient to the faith.

Readiness: Encouragement and strength for spiritual battle

- Lord, may Your word increase and disciples greatly multiply even as we face...



FELLOWSHIP

In the church, the word “fellowship” usually refers to a body of believers who assemble for a multitude of common purposes. Mostly friendly people meet for such things as worship, prayer, and group Bible study. Other times they may share an interest in meeting the needs of others as an outreach of the church. People also meet for companionship and camaraderie as they share a meal or minister to one another. The church offers numerous opportunities for fellowship throughout the year. Some are seasonal and fun, while others are more serious and offer help. All are designed to benefit the body of Christ. We have in common a shared life in Christ that unites our hearts to one another (Ps. 133:1a). We embrace each other as a family and we are intentional about our love for one another and our determination to maintain a responsibility to the body of Christ. It is always good when God’s people fellowship in unity.

Unfortunately, there are some in the church who — for whatever reason — do not share in this bounty of fellowship, and it is incumbent upon the church to reach out to them. People who are not Christians, but are drawn to the church, need to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ and hopefully receive Him as Savior. They need to know that God loves them and that Christ died for them. There are also those who may be ill, grieving the loss of a loved one, or simply feeling lonely. A lack of friends and close relationships can produce loneliness, which can lead to spiritual or emotional depression, a poor self-image, or even feeling sorry for oneself. Lonely people who carry heavy burdens of anxiety, grief, disappointments, and physical or mental pain need to be met with love, compassion, and understanding.

In times such as these, it is good to remind people that God loves them, that He is very aware of their pain and what they are going through, and that He is good and faithful to meet their needs when they trust Him. And even though they may know these truths about God, in their moments of intense discomfort it doesn’t always feel like it. That is when prayer and His Word are most comforting. We pray God’s Word over them, trusting God to do for them what only He can do. When we bear one another’s burdens we help lighten the load (Gal. 6:2).

People at every level of maturity face challenges of life that can be overwhelming, but God has promised to never leave or forsake His children (Deut. 31:8). The Lord will provide all that His children need for a life that is founded on faith in Him. That rings true no matter the circumstances we face (Phil. 4:19). Christians should never be too busy to minister to those in need, especially to those who are of the family of God, who are hurting or have gone astray. Jesus Himself teaches this parable using the analogy of the lost sheep in Matthew 18:12.



The enemy loves for people to become disconnected from the church. Without fellowship they become isolated, making it easier for him to attack them with lies, criticisms, and innuendos. He knows that we are stronger together and that “No weapon formed against us will prosper” (Isa. 54:17). We declare God’s Word aloud, that we are overcomers and children of the Most-High God: “Greater is He in us than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4). The enemy has to flee at the spoken Word of God, which will put him to flight every time! I have discovered throughout my life that there are three things with which to defeat the enemy when feeling lonely: The Word of God, prayer, and praise. He hates all three of these things because they defeat him!

The church staff should not be the only ones to reach out to those who are no longer in fellowship with the church. God holds us all responsible for seeing to the lonely, the hurting, and those in need of help. When Jesus asks us to love our neighbor, that means to be gracious in giving of ourselves and to show unconditional love with no strings attached. Something as simple as a card with kind words and a reminder that they are being prayed for can help to draw a brother or sister back into fellowship. A visit, a tangible gift such as a meal, baked goods, soup, flowers, an offering of transportation, an invitation to church, or an invitation to join you at your genderspecific prayer group will mean much to them. If visiting someone from the opposite sex, take a friend along with you for support and to exercise prudence. Always give encouragement and pray with them before you leave — and try not to overstay your welcome.

The women’s prayer group at my church has met every Saturday for almost 30 years. Even during the pandemic, they did not stop meeting to worship our Lord and pray from His Word. They met outside and in the church narthex. During the loss of my husband and later my son, I was ministered to by these women in many different ways and by the body of Christ. Their love and concern helped to lighten my grief and shine a light for Jesus. I felt loved and so will those we minister to.

Doing for others and meeting their needs may dispel the loneliness and may even offer up the opportunity to make new friends or even bring that lost sheep back into the fold. This is a fellowship that pleases God. There is such joy to be experienced when we fellowship and love one another as Christ loves us. Then we become the fragrance of Christ. As the time for Christ’s return draws closer, may He find us faithful. May we hear Him say to us, “*Well done, good and faithful servant*” (Matt. 25:23). He wants us to do good works for Him by ministering to others, using the gifts He has placed in the church, and bringing Him glory. By fellowshipping with Him and with His people, Jesus reminds us that wherever two or three are gathered in His name, He is there with us (Matt. 18:20).



FELLOWSHIP PRAYER GUIDE

Luke 15:1-7

Reverence: Identify and celebrate God's praiseworthy attributes

- Jesus befriends sinners and fellowships with them (v. 2)
- God seeks after and joyfully saves the lost (vv. 4-5)
- God as our shepherd calls others into joyful fellowship (v. 6)
- All of heaven celebrates with God over one repentant sinner (v. 7)

Prayer Prompts

- Jesus my Shepherd, I praise You that You sought after and saved me when...
- God, I thank You for how...(name church leader(s)) have demonstrated Your heart for the lost by...
- Jesus thank You for receiving and welcoming me even though I...

Response: Surrender to Him and His ways

- Lord, I confess that I have grumbled over you showing others grace when...
- Jesus, we admit as a church that we have not displayed Your shepherd's heart to...

Requests: Ask the Spirit to guide prayer over concerns, resources, and relationships

- Jesus, may our church be a place where others draw near to You in order that...
- Lord, give...(church leader) and us Your joy to lovingly go after those who...
- Lord, we pray that one day all of heaven will celebrate over... (name specific person) as they repent and turn to You.

Readiness: Encouragement and strength for spiritual battle

- Jesus, remind us today that the joy of heaven is greater than the opposition of...



WISDOM

When it comes to praying for wisdom for your church leaders, the prevailing framework would be, “God, please just help them to have wisdom so that they may DO..., preach, lead, counsel, strategize, etc.” If so much rides on wisdom for your pastor/leaders, then perhaps a deeper dive into how to pray in this area is warranted.

Wisdom comes from God and is ultimately for God. Wisdom, in the world’s eyes, is often about “doing.” The Oxford definition of wisdom is “the quality of having experience, knowledge, and good judgment.” Worldly wisdom entails gaining valuable experiences, building knowledge (amassed from authors, speakers, past and common experiences for skills, tools, techniques, and methodologies), and good judgment to integrate it all for doing the best job possible.

Wisdom, in God’s kingdom, is about “being.” Outwardly, your leader may appear very successful and gifted, even fruitful, but inwardly, he may be a desert or far from the Lord. How tragic it would be after years of sacrifice and hard work “for the Lord,” to hear from God, “I never knew you” (Matt. 7:22-23).

The Scriptures speak of a wisdom at a whole different level. This wisdom is a knowledge and understanding that comes from God and can only be granted from Him (Prov. 2:10). When requested, it will be granted generously (Jas. 1:5). “*The spirit of wisdom and the revelation in the knowledge of Him*” is given by God (Eph. 1:17). At the foundation of this wisdom is the “*fear of the Lord*” (Ps. 111:10). This underscores that the key source of wisdom which is from God is a knowledge of Him. How often do we assume that our spiritual leaders already know God and therefore should automatically already have godly wisdom? Preparations for sermons, meetings, developing programs, counseling others, and a plethora of other activities cannot equate to knowing God’s character and heart in an experiential way that transforms the heart and molds the mind. There is, first and foremost, a need for asking God for wisdom, as godly wisdom cannot be attained any other way. **Pray** for your pastor to ask God to be filled with the knowledge of God in every moment so that, decision by decision, in every conversation, wisdom flows out. **Pray** for the ability to prioritize time and space (a humble and quiet heart) to be with God and to seek know Him intimately. As your leader gains “face-to-face” knowledge of the most High God, **pray** for him to have the fear of the Lord above all else. From a true knowledge of God comes knowledge of ourselves and temptations that we are prone to. The temptation to fear man and the natural desire for approval from church leaders and congregants, family, friends, other pastors, and their denomination is a strong pull (away from fear of the Lord) that your leader is experiencing more often than you would ever know.



Your leader needs a God-fearing heart that seeks to cultivate the character of “being.” **Pray** for your pastor to be able to take inventory of his own inner well-being, asking questions like, “How is my heart before God, rather than my performance?” “Am I serving out of the joy of intimacy with God, or out of duty?” **Pray** for your pastor/leader to build Christ-like character that infiltrates into how he operates daily in EVERY aspect of life. Just to start the list, pray for God to reveal to your pastor/leader:

1. Wisdom to be able to hear and discern God’s voice, above all the noise that surrounds them.
2. Wisdom to know and to focus only on the priorities (the Word and prayer — Acts 6:4) that God has for them in their calling.
3. Wisdom to seek relationships that they can trust in for prayer, support, and accountability TO HEART ISSUES.
4. Wisdom to guide, nurture, and shepherd their spouse and children.
5. Wisdom to guard their regular rhythms of sabbath with the Lord, time for R, R, &R (rest, reflection, and refreshment), and to care for their own soul.
6. Wisdom to know how to use their influence in a way that points people toward the knowledge of God, leadership that is “*worthy of the Lord, pleasing Him in all respects, and bearing fruit*” (Col. 1:9-11).

¹³ *Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.* ¹⁴ *But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth.* ¹⁵ *This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.* ¹⁶ *For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.* ¹⁷ *But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.* ¹⁸ *And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” James 3:13-18*

This passage gives more verbiage for how we may pray for our leaders to be able to model a heart of wisdom. Wisdom is gentleness and is seen by good behavior. Our pastors and leaders must often fight temptations of pride, power, and using their authority to lord over their flock. **Pray** for them to be on guard for and resist “bitter jealousy, selfish ambition, arrogance.” **Pray** for your leader to have a pure heart that is not “double-minded” (Jas. 4:8), but have the enduring motives of loving God (and His people) and glorify God (and see Him glorified in the church). **Pray** that your pastor’s wise heart would be evident in a “peaceable, gentle, reasonable” attitude that is “full of mercy, unwavering in God’s priorities for them, without any hypocrisy.” As the leaders



go, so will the church. Is your heart's burning desire to see your church as pure (clean hands, clean hearts), peaceable (harmonious relationships), reasonable (obedient), full of mercy (compassion), with good fruits, unwavering (not judgmental or divisive), and without hypocrisy (genuine, without pretense)? Begin by praying for these qualities in your leaders. Pray for your pastor and church leaders to sow these hallmarks of wisdom in peace and thereby reap the fruit of righteousness (Jas. 3:18).



WISDOM PRAYER GUIDE

James 3:13-18

Reverence: Identify and celebrate God's praiseworthy attributes

- Jesus perfectly displays the meekness of wisdom (v. 13)
- Jesus is Himself, pure, peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere (v. 17)
- God is righteous and brings peace (v. 18)

Prayer Prompts:

- Jesus, I praise You because You are...(list a specific description from v. 17) and I have experienced this when...
- Lord, thank You for how...(church leader) has shown me Your wisdom in...

Response: Surrender to Him and His ways

- Lord, we confess that we live by earthly wisdom when...
- Jesus, we repent of jealousy and selfish ambition over...

Requests: Ask the Spirit to guide prayer over concerns, resources, and relationships

- Lord, help...(church leader) be...(name a facet of wisdom from v. 17) especially when...
- Lord, help me to be...(name a facet of wisdom from v. 17) especially when...
- Lord may our church show the meekness of wisdom by our good conduct of...

Readiness: Encouragement and strength for spiritual battle

- Lord Jesus, give us grace to sow peace as we...



TEMPTATIONS

“And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one.” Matthew 6:13

*“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been **tempted** as we are, yet without sin.” Hebrews 4:15*

Picture a rainbow trout quietly and safely floating in its stand of grasses or still waters along the shore or behind a rock. A fly drops onto the water and wiggles, attempting to return to the air. This arrests the attention of the fish, which is, naturally, always hungry. In most cases the fish, if it pursues the fly, will secure a bit of food. Because this occurs thousands of times daily in the fish’s natural habitat, it is the most reasonable thing to do. So, without “thinking” of the consequences, the fish darts from its protective cover and bites the fly. Only this time, it is not a fly, but a lure with an embedded hook that, unless the fish can disengage from, will inevitably render it flopping and dying in the bottom of a fisherman’s boat.

This is how temptation works. *“But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death”* (Jas. 1:14-15). While temptation itself is not sin, it can, and too often does, lead to sin. In this passage, James uses fishing terminology to picture for us the “sequencing” of temptation leading to sin. *Lured* and *enticed* (v. 14) both mean “to draw out, to lure away” and “to entice by use of bait,” like a fisherman who lures his prey from its place of safety, hoping to hook, trap, or net the fish.

The first impulses felt when we encounter temptation are intended to cause us interest or curiosity. The first objective is to arouse our attention. In most cases, our desires are normal and natural. James uses the word desire in this way. Temptation occurs when a natural impulse arises in me to pursue something, believing all the while that I need it or want it, or it is some behavior I can justify. I begin to believe that by behaving a certain way, my desires will be satisfied.

It could be as simple as feeling hungry and saying to yourself, “I should get some food.”

It *looks* like a good or pleasing thing to the senses or the desires of the heart — not in itself a bad thing. But in this case, it is not good. What will help discerning “fish” (meaning us humans) to determine that temptation has arisen to deceive us and to draw us into sin?

There are a thousand impulses we face daily tied to our emotions, our experiences, our desires, and so many other “things.” *Recognizing* the likelihood that temptation could



masquerade as appealing, even desirable (on first look), is our first line of defense. This awareness can help defend against things that, “on second thought,” we can more easily recognize are not at all what they seem. They are very likely to have an embedded hook — and that hook, once engaged, will bring forth a kind of death. And we will suffer the consequences (guilt, shame, regret, punishment, etc.) of having once again betrayed our Lord.

The fourth movement of The Lord’s Prayer (cited above) is designed to ready us, to make us aware of the pervasive reality, the personal evil, and the perverse nature of temptation. In our readiness we will be more able to stand against it or escape it, even when we have already left our “safe waters” but not yet “taken the bait.”

In praying for your church leaders, pray then with this conscious dynamic in mind.

Pray that they would not be lured by the personal desire to “be somebody.” That their natural pride or ambition would not be inflated by favorable immediate circumstances, elevated station in life, or positive reception from people. That they would desire to build God’s kingdom and not their own (Luke 11:2).

Pray that your church leaders would not stumble over disappointment or personal discouragement and suffer the debilitating fatigue that accompanies it. That they would not lose heart in the battle and give in. That in faithfulness they will labor onward, holding to godliness and biblical norms and principles in spite of momentary negative circumstances (2 Cor. 4:1-2).

Pray that your leaders’ hearts’ desire would be to serve the Lord by His Word with gladness and His people with willing eagerness, integrity, exemplary humility and that they would not become domineering or demanding, only interested in personal gain (1 Pet. 5:1-3).

Pray that you and others in the church would support your leaders in their efforts to align the fellowship with biblical standards and practices and not be tempted to demand your own way or your own comfort (Phil. 2:1-4; Heb. 13:17).

Your greatest gifts to your church leaders — indeed, to your church generally — are your obedience, your support, and especially your prayers. The adversary targets church leaders. Stand with Temptations them to defend the body of Christ against his intrusion, diversion, distraction, and destruction.



TEMPTATIONS PROVISION PRAYER GUIDE

Hebrews 4:14-16

Reverence: Identify and celebrate God's praiseworthy attributes

- Jesus is our great high priest and the Son of God (v. 14)
- As our great high priest, Jesus sympathizes with our weaknesses (v. 15)
- Jesus is our sinless Savior (v. 15)
- Our God's throne is one of abundance grace, mercy, and help (v. 16)

Prayer Prompts:

- Jesus I praise You as my great high priest for the sympathy and strength You gave in my struggle with...
- Lord, thank You for how...(church leader) has displayed Your sympathy by...

Response: Surrender to Him and His ways

- Lord, rather than holding fast to our confession, I have struggled to believe that You...
- Jesus, I admit that I often give in to the temptation to...

Requests: Ask the Spirit to guide prayer over concerns, resources, and relationships

- Lord, help...(church leader) experience and reflect You as their great high priest as they...
- Lord, we come to You confidently on behalf of...that they would receive your grace and mercy to help them in...

Readiness: Encouragement and strength for spiritual battle

- Lord Jesus, help us to confidently draw near to Your throne of grace in our battle with...



FINANCIAL CONTENTMENT

Christian contentment is the God-given ability to be satisfied with the provision of God in all circumstances. He promises to supply all of our needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:19). Financial contentment is not found in our wealth. There are no prizes for who wins the most marbles and there is no joy in getting all you can and canning all you get. I believe God's got us no matter our financial situation. His Word promises that if we seek Him first, everything we need will be given to us. He is the answer for all of our needs and for everything we will face in life (Matt. 6:33).

We live in a very materialistic world, and the church is not immune from buying into the practice of being material-minded. If we are not content in Him, we will never be satisfied with what He provides. We live in a society that likes to be in control. We don't like being unhappy or in need. We are easily dissatisfied and disappointed when life's circumstances don't measure up to our expectations. Without contentment, we will always want more and we will always want the best of everything; the name brands, the high-end items, the most toys, the latest models, etc. Sadly, we often justify the practice of this attitude, especially when God has enriched us financially. Many people will even over-extend their credit cards to get what they want. But the Lord tells us in His Word to keep our lives free from the love of money (Heb. 13:5). How easy it is to forget that God provides for the life that is founded on faith. Craving wealth disrupts our moral character and distracts us from the things that are important to God.

Learning to be content is one of life's great blessings (Ps. 37:25). In Psalm 37, David's life experiences taught him that God both protects and provides for His own. He wants us to trust *Him* for our needs, not our bank accounts. The Apostle Paul's letter to the Philippians displayed a spirit of contentment and gratitude. He encouraged the church by urging them to focus their gaze on Christ and to strive for unity, not wealth. He preached contentment and joy no matter the circumstances. He knew from experience that God would provide. He knew how to be happy and content both in abundance and in scarcity. He knew that Christ was his ultimate strength and provision. He taught us to be satisfied in Christ alone and not in things. We will never be satisfied with getting more things.

What a wonderful lesson for us to learn — being content in Christ alone and not our positions or possessions, power, or personal wealth. As a Pharisee, Paul had lived a life of affluence and influence, but he chose to look for opportunities to lift the hearts of other believers who might be feeling discouraged or overwhelmed. Being content financially gives us an awesome sense of satisfaction in what God provides. It comes from knowing and trusting God, who is more than able to provide for us. Contentment is resting in God's sufficiency, in His faithfulness, and in His goodness.



Paul trusted God completely, yet he knew what it was like to be abased, to be treated with disdain and disrespect, and to be seen as less deserving. I can also attest to the experience of being abased. It can be humiliating when you are rejected and doors of opportunity are closed through no fault of your own. But God! He always has a plan if we will only trust Him. When you have little, even small things can become great blessings that kindle great gratitude. This was Paul's life of being content when he had much and when he had little. We should learn from him.

As a widow, I faced an abundance of challenges that I had never encountered prior to my husband's death. I had to trust God for things previously taken for granted. I had never handled our finances but when my husband died, I had to learn to pay bills and fulfill the responsibilities of handling the finances for the first time. God provided capable and competent people to guide me in the process, but ultimately, I had to trust Him. He taught me to give to Him first and foremost and then to numerous organizations of His concern that He revealed to me. He taught me the joy of giving in numerous ways and living within my means, of living without debt, and the wisdom of increase. I have learned from personal experience that financial contentment comes from giving, not gaining. It comes from knowing that in the measure we give, God will use that measure to give back to us. But He returns wit *"good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over"* (Luke 6:38).

Even to this day, God is still increasing my giving and my contentment. It comes from what He provides, when He provides, and how He provides. Our Heavenly Father will always take care of His own. But the question remains for us — will we trust Him enough to be content in Him? He says, *"And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need"* (Mal. 3:10). In my life I have personally found this to be true. I have never had a need that God did not supply. God's blessings come in a myriad of ways because He loves and cares for His children. May Financial Contentment we remember to always be thankful for His blessings and for what He provides. This, indeed, is the key to financial contentment.



FINANCIAL CONTENTMENT PRAYER GUIDE

Philippians 4 4:10-20

Reverence: Identify and celebrate God's praiseworthy attributes

- Giver of joy and contentment (vv. 10-11)
- Strengthens us to fulfill God's call (v. 13)
- Provides through partnership with others (vv. 14-16)
- Supplies our needs according to the riches of His glory (v. 19)
- Our God and Father, who is forever glorious (v. 20)

Prayer Prompts:

- Lord, we rejoice in You greatly because ...
- God, thank You for the strength in Christ You gave me so that I could...
- Father, I praise You for how You generously provided for my needs when...

Response: Surrender to Him and His ways

- Lord, we confess our lack of contentment in...
- Father we repent for not trusting in Your provision for...

Requests: Ask the Spirit to guide prayer over concerns, resources, and relationships

- Lord, cause...(church leader) to greatly rejoice in the contentment You can provide as they...
- Lord, help...(church leader) to trust in You to meet their needs of/for...according to Your glorious riches
- Lord, give us generous hearts to enter into partnership with our church leaders by...

Readiness: Encouragement and strength for spiritual battle

- Father, may our lives be a fragrant offering, acceptable and pleasing to You as we...
- Antiphonal Response: "To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen!"



HOUSEHOLD

The best strategy to take down an opponent is to remove the thing that makes them strong. Whether its double-teaming a wide receiver on the opposing football team, placing “the robber” on the brick quarry of a friend in Settlers of Catan, or blowing up the “Death Star,” the concept of finding the weakness in or around an opponent is the key to victory... or at least causing large amounts of difficulty and/or destruction. This is not any different in the battles that truly matter. Our leaders are under fire from the adversary on a constant basis, and the best defense against this barrage is a squad of faithful warriors praying for their household.

When a leader is strong in themselves and proves to be immune to direct attacks, the enemy’s strategy of attack often turns to those closest to them; those in their “house.” It is not uncommon to speak of those within someone’s family as their house. The Bible uses this term over 100 hundred times alone regarding the life of David, to describe either the immediate family or the descendants of a specific leader. Luke 2:4 tells us that Jesus’ earthly father, Joseph, was of the house and lineage of David...that’s why Jesus was born in Bethlehem. The first call on a leader’s life is to their family.

To take this a step further, I believe Jesus had a specific intention in telling the parable of a wise and a foolish man building their respective houses, found in Matthew 7:24-27 (paralleled in Luke 6:47-49). Jesus uses a common reference, in the building aspect, and at the same time speaks of not only a singular life but the life of the household of each of those men as well. He speaks of building a life and family on the rock — in Jesus’ day someone’s “house” included both. Herein lies a great place to start praying for the “houses” of our leaders. What does Jesus say? “And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.”

So with this in mind, think about these specifics as you pray for your church leaders.

Pray that your leaders’ families would have a firm foundation built on Jesus, the Rock. Pray that they would not only know the Rock and preach/teach the Rock but that their houses would have a firm foundation on the Rock. Being a pastor’s kid myself, I had a frontrow seat to the struggle of practicing what one preaches, especially in the “safety” of our home. It wasn’t that my parents didn’t have the proper foundation, but I was privy to the struggle that came with making difficult and intentional choices, submissions, and the necessity of requesting forgiveness when mistakes were made. I can tell you firsthand that the foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ is all we had some days...but it was, and is, enough!



Pray for your leader's personal example in the home. Spouses and children get to see what that leader is like when they are not “on,” and those are the moments when the truth comes out about what a leader truly believes. Proverbs 20:7 says, “The righteous who walks in his integrity — blessed are his children after him!” A leader who walks the talk will have a child who believes the talk. But beyond the truth of their integrity, also pray for their children’s perception of that truth, because selfishness and disillusionment can cloud an otherwise apparent view.

Pray for family unity and intentionality toward edification. I remember there were times when my father made sacrifices of which I had absolutely no understanding, and my mother was quick to point out that my perception of him was often limited by my own selfish point of view. My mother also sought to build my dad up. She taught me that he had enough critics and that we didn’t need to be numbered among them. Pray that this would be true about your leader’s family.

Pray that their spouse would be their #1-Second. Dennis Henderson, North American Director for The 6:4 Fellowship and co-author, with his wife Billie, of *21 Days of Prayer for Couples*, builds a top-five people priority list in a leader’s life, inspired by the book of Ephesians, chapters 5 and 6. It is no surprise that God is first, but the (#1) second is NOT the “house”...but it is, specifically, the spouse. THEN the children. Pray that their spouse holds the proper place in priorities of time, attention, and affection.

Pray that your leader's children will be prioritized above the ministry. Numbers four and five on the Henderson list (Paul’s list to the Ephesians) are occupation and ministry. Pray that your church leaders remember to put their children’s needs above those of the church. What God calls us to does not contradict a previous calling He has put on our lives. Parenthood is a noble calling for both mother and father, whether that parent is a pastor, a rock star, or the president of the United States.

Pray that your leader's love for their spouse would be evident. More is caught than taught in the lives of children, and often it is the unspoken parts of parents’ love that most edify a child’s understanding of relationships and soothe their need for comfort and safety.

Pray that the Holy Spirit will strengthen and inspire your leader's children to honor, respect, and submit to them. Ephesians 6:1-3 states plainly that a child’s responsibility — their job, if you will — is to honor and obey their parents. Yet in today’s culture, that is often not what children see from their peers. They need the Holy Spirit to be able to do what God has asked of them, just as we do for that to which God has called us. This can be a common place for an enemy foothold, so pray over this relationship early and often in their lives.



Your leaders, like the rest of us, have an unseen enemy that is seeking to attack their “house.” This adversarial army disguises its members, trying to make your leaders think that other people (such as their own family) or circumstances are fighting against them. But Paul says in Ephesians 6:12 that, “...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.” Ultimately, pray that the truths of this passage would be at the forefront of your leaders’ minds and that Christ’s peace would prevail within their house.



HOUSEHOLD PRAYER GUIDE

Matthew 7: 24-29

Reverence: Identify and celebrate God's praiseworthy attributes

- Jesus is our rock and foundation (vv. 24-25)
- Jesus' words build a solid foundation for our households (v. 24)
- Jesus' words guard and preserve us from the trials of life and ministry (v. 25)
- Jesus teaches with authority and integrity (vv. 28-29)

Prayer Prompts:

- Jesus, we praise You for being our rock and foundation when...
- Jesus, only Your words can build a solid foundation for our lives because...
- Jesus, thank You for how...(church leader) has modeled Your words by...

Response: Surrender to Him and His ways

- Lord Jesus, we confess for how we have only heard and not obeyed Your word in...
- Jesus, we repent for seeking to build our lives on...instead of Your teaching.

Requests: Ask the Spirit to guide prayer over concerns, resources, and relationships

- Jesus, help...(church leader) to build their household on Your word that says...
- Lord, may Your word preserve...in their trial(s) of...

Readiness: Encouragement and strength for spiritual battle

- Lord Jesus, be our Rock and keep us from falling as we face...

