

Why Your Pastor Needs You to Stand in the Gap

My first pastor is in prison. My former pastor is no longer pastoring. My current pastor, Steve Gray, started at a small country church with a handful of people.

I lived with my first pastor and his wife and watched as they dealt with a church split and the shut-down of a ministry. The betrayal, the hurt and the pain they faced made me not want to go into the ministry. It wasn't until years later when I worked for a few years for my current pastor that I wanted anything to do with ministry.

One time I asked him and his wife how they dealt with all the stuff that would drive normal people insane. I was amazed at the level of attack directed at them that most of the congregation didn't know about. I understand their wisdom in wanting to protect the church from the battle they faced.

I recently watched a video of Pastor Ron Carpenter of World Redemption Outreach Center where he tearfully revealed the horror of what he has endured the last 10 years. I was struck by how he shared that he continued to preach with the weight of that dark secret of his wife's infidelity on him for the sake of the people.

I wept as I watched him sob behind the pulpit about how this was the worst day of his life. It was heart wrenching, yet a stark reminder of how desperately we need to pray for our pastors. My own pastor had recently shared how he didn't feel covered in prayer.

When he shared that at a service, I was convicted because while I had been praying for him, it wasn't with really any depth. It was an obligatory, this is the right thing to do type of prayer. Just like he said in that service, he wondered

how much heart people had put into prayer.

After he shared that, he started leading Thursday night prayer services. In those services, he coached us on how to dig into the depths of prayer and worship. I remember I bawled my eyes out the first time he led prayer and had an amazing encounter with God.

As a result of those services, my husband, Jerome and I set aside one of the rooms in our home as a prayer room. Last night on our date, Jerome told me how he spent three hours in prayer on Sunday night in our prayer room. "It didn't even feel like three hours," he said.

We pray together when we can and spend time in our Prayer Room reading the Bible, worshipping or putting into practice what we've learned. Last night after our date, I spent time praying for Pastor Ron and the other pastors in my life.

October is Pastor Appreciation Month. Of course we should pray for our pastors beyond October. Here are some facts about pastors in America:

- 50% of pastor's marriages end in divorce
- 18,000 ministers annually leave the ministry due to burnout, termination or moral/marital issues
- 80% of minister's spouses wish their spouse would choose another profession

We should pray for our pastors because of the pressure placed on them and their families to be perfect. We tolerate imperfection but when a pastor or a member of his family shows their humanity or weakness, we tend to attack them. I understand that application of the Scripture: "For an overseer must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not easily angered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not greedy for dishonest gain, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, self-controlled, just, holy, temperate, holding firmly the trustworthy word that is in accordance with the teaching,

that he may be able both to exhort with sound doctrine and to convince those who oppose it" (Titus 1:7-9, MEV).

But the people in the pews are called to be the light of the world and workers of the ministry according to Ephesians 4:11-13. Before we attack leaders for being human, we need to set that standard to ourselves first. Personally, I hate bashing leaders or ministers. Bashing is so easy and people love it.

Pastor Ron said in the video that he expected to be the butt of jokes and that some people watching it may be celebrating. I find it sickening that someone would enjoy another person's day in hell. Let's commit to pray for our pastors everyday. Pray for protection. Pray for strength. Pray for wisdom.

May God help us fight our prayerless, carnal, immature, selfish bent.

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