

Yesterday we talked about the roles and responsibilities of a pastor. We saw that pastors should remember: ministry is not about status, but service; not about power, but purity; not about recognition, but faithfulness.

Prayer and spending time in the word of God are essential to living a life of service, purity and faithfulness. Without these two pillars, ministry becomes hollow, powerless, and self-driven. But with them, the pastor becomes a vessel filled with divine wisdom, strength, and grace.

Let's first talk about the power of prayer. During Jesus' earthly ministry, Luke tells us in 5:16 Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness to pray. If the Son of God himself needed to pray often, how much more do we who serve in his name?

I want to look at three things prayer does for us as pastors. First, prayer keeps a pastor connected to God. Ministry without prayer is like a feather in the wind. It flies this way and that and while it is moving, there's no consistent direction. You can do ministry without praying, but the ministry will lack direction. A lack of prayer arises out of a lack of faith. If you doubt that God is able to answer your prayers, why pray?

Look at what James says in 1:5-8: If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.⁷ That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord.⁸ Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.

Through prayer, pastors hear God's voice, gain God's wisdom, discern God's will, find direction for their work and receive strength for their ministry.

Here's the second thing prayer does for us. Prayer protects the pastor's heart. Pastoral ministry is one of the most joy-filled, difficult things a person can do. The burdens of ministry can lead to discouragement, exhaustion, and temptation. Sometimes, ministry can feel like you have a motorcycle, but there's no gas in the tank. You have the vehicle you need to get you

where you want to go, but you can't get there because there's no fuel. Prayer is the fuel for ministry.

Philippians 4:6-7 reminds us that prayer brings peace that guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

I don't know about you, but for me, when I feel strong and things are going well, Satan's temptation don't have much power, when I stressed or tired those temptations can more easily draw me away from God.

That is why when we are stressed or tired, we desperately need to go to God in prayer. Prayer guards our hearts.

Prayer empowers preaching and leadership.

Before great moves of God in Scripture, there was always prayer.

Before God parted the Red Sea, Moses prayed.

Before God shut the mouths of the lions, Daniel prayed.

Before God feed the 5,000, Jesus prayed.

Before God filled the disciples with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the disciples prayed.

Every great revival which has happened since, came to be because God's people prayed.

A prayerless pastor may be eloquent, but not effective; organized, but not anointed.

It does little good to just talk about it, we need to do it. So before we move on, let's take some time to pray that God will move mightily in our midst. I love the way African believers pray. All together and all at once. Feel free to stand up if you want. Brothers and sisters, let's pray.

The second pillar upon which pastors must their lives is: Scripture Reading and Study

2 Timothy 3:16-17 — “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”

Paul identifies four key ways Scripture benefits us:

1. Doctrine — What is right.

Scripture teaches us who God is, what truth is, and how we are to live.

2. Reproof — What is not right.

It exposes sin, error, and falsehood in our lives and in the world.

3. Correction — How to get right.

The Word not only convicts; it restores and guides us back to the right path.

4. Instruction in righteousness — How to stay right.

Scripture trains us to walk consistently with God’s will and character.

The Word of God is the pastor’s daily bread and ministry guide.

Scripture shapes the pastor’s life before it shapes their sermons.

Before feeding others, pastors must feed themselves. Look at what David says about the word of God in Psalm 119:1-16. Would someone in each location read that passage aloud?

According to my version of the Bible, verse 16 says, “I delight in your decrees, I will not neglect your word.” Sadly, I have encountered a number of pastors who neglect God’s word. They are so busy doing the work of God that they don’t have time for the word of God.

The Word sanctifies, renews, and keeps the pastor’s soul anchored in truth.

Scripture equips the pastor to lead and teach.

A shepherd cannot guide the flock without knowing the map of God’s Word.

2 Timothy 2:15 says, Word hard so you can present yourself to God and receive his approval. Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth.

Before a person can correctly explain the word of truth, he or she must know the word of truth. Don't make the mistake of knowing part of God's story. And don't simply pick out a verse, because it proves your point, when it doing so distorts what is said around it. My favorite example of this is the verse in which Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15:32 Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die. Taken out of context, we can say that the Bible teaches us to just enjoy ourselves, do what feels good because it really doesn't matter anyway because we're going to die. Of course, if you read all of verse 32 and what the surrounding verses say, you will quickly realize that's not what Paul is saying at all.

You must word hard, as Paul said to Timothy to know and explain God's word correctly.

Scripture guards against error and worldliness.

In an age of confusion and compromise, only a Word-filled pastor can keep the church grounded. There are many false doctrines and false teachers in the world, only when you have put God's word into your heart will you be able to protect your congregation from these.

Here's one last thing I want to mention. The Bible must not just be quoted—it must be lived and obeyed. How often have you seen some famous preacher fall because he or she was great at spouting Bible verses, but failed to live them out.

Prayer and the Word are not separate disciplines—they work together in perfect harmony.

Prayer prepares the heart to receive the Word. You should always pray before you open up the Bible. Ask God to reveal his truth to you. God's word is alive and to understand it correctly, we need the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

In the same way, the Word gives direction to prayer. One of my favorite ways to praying is to pray the promises of the Bible. In doing so, I am remember the promises myself and I remind God of his promises, which is something that the writers of the Bible did.

Prayer and studying scripture go hand in hand. Together they form the spiritual rhythm of a healthy pastor's life.

In Acts 6:4, the apostles refused to be distracted by lesser duties. They knew that prayer and the ministry of the Word were *non-negotiables*.

When a pastor prioritizes these two, the church grows strong, the Spirit moves freely, and the pastor remains spiritually alive.

Pastor, your effectiveness in ministry depends not on how many programs you run, but how much time you spend with God.

Prayer and Scripture are not optional—they are *essential*.

Let us, like the apostles, devote ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word. For when the pastor's heart burns with Scripture and prayer, the church will shine with the fire of God's presence.