

I Will Pray for My Church Leaders
West Valley Presbyterian Church

Introduction

- Last week we heard of the birth of a new baby in the congregation. For the mother, we hope that this is a joyous event. **How should we pray for the mother?**
- Perhaps you will pray for something that you have which **you value**, like financial security.
- Perhaps you would pray for something that **you lack** in your own life, like happiness.
- It is **easy to project** what we want onto what we think other people want or should need.
- The best way that we can pray for a new mother is to **first ask her** what she wants/needs. It may just be a **good night's sleep**.
- Jesus demonstrates this in Matthew 20:32 when confronted with two blind men. **“³² Jesus stopped and called them. “What do you want me to do for you?” he asked.”¹**

pause

- Today we are continuing with a sermon series which follows the book ***I Am a Church Member*** which we are going through during our second hour dgroups. This week's chapter is *I Will Pray for My Church Leaders*.
- The book concentrates on “**pastors**” but we have other types of leaders that are elected by the congregation: “**ruling elders**” and **Deacons**. When I talk about leadership, I will talk about **pastors, elders, and deacons**, as well as **ministry leaders such as Steve and Terri**.
- When I talk generally about church leaders, I mean all of these people.
- In Romans 12:4–8 when Paul talks about **the body of Christ**, he refers to different parts that serve different functions. Our church leaders are a prime example of this.
- My **objective** for this morning is to encourage **prayer for our leaders**.
- With this in mind, the ushers will come forward now to pass out baskets with slips of paper with the names of our leaders. I encourage you to take one name and **focus your prayers** for church leadership on that one person, on **one of our leaders**.

pause

1 *The New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Mt 20:32.

- If I asked you to pray for our leaders right now, most of us would **not have any difficulty** in thinking about something to pray about.
- What was the first thing that you thought of? Was it something like:
 - Please help **WVPC to grow** or for **Crash Zone** ministry to increase or the **choir** to grow.
- These items are all good, but they are prayers **about programs** and not people. Programs run through people. **People are the tools that God uses.** In the Bible we hear of the mighty deeds that God does but it is **always through a human agent.**
- So how do we pray for people in church leadership?

- First let me turn to our pastor - **Kim Engelmann.**
- As a seminary **student at Fuller** who is considering going into ordained ministry, the work of a pastor is new and a **bit scary** for me.
 - People come to you **expecting results** and you have to have the **wisdom** to act. Sometimes the wisest action is to **say nothing.** We can pray for a **sense of God's timing.**
 - I've discovered that it takes a **long time to prepare a sermon.** It can take 20 hours of work to prepare a good one. Can you find an extra 20 hours in your week to do a single task? Then imagine doing that **week after week,** the entire year. **Chapter 4** of *I Am a Church Member* does a pretty good job of describing what can happen to a pastor's schedule. In the book the pastor has a sermon to do but church life happens and they end up with no time to prepare a sermon or to grieve for a person who just died.
 - **Paul writes** about being under pressure in 2 Corinthians 1:8-9

“We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we **despaired** of life itself. ⁹Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened that we **might not rely on ourselves but on God,** who raises the dead.” Pressure is not a new thing but we must **rely not** upon ourselves but **on God.**
 - A pastor is expected to do all of the above and have time for family too!
 - What about her **spiritual** life, **devotional** time?
 - Some companies in the Valley promote a healthy **work/life balance** but it is up to pastors to **manage this themselves.**
 - Pastors need prayer to **survive and flourish** in this environment.

- A pastor's life is not without reward.
- Eugene H. Peterson, in his book "The Pastor", when asked about what he likes about being a pastor replied "the mess." He says "Well, not exactly a mess, but coming upon something **unexpected** that I don't know how to handle, where I **feel inadequate**. Another name for it is **miracle** that doesn't look like a miracle but the exact opposite of miracle. A slow **recognition of life, God's life**, taking form **in a person and context**, in words or action that takes me off-guard." (283)
- Like the mother of a newborn, I asked Kim how we could pray for her. Her answer was that she wants to **experience the anointing of the Holy Spirit** in greater fullness each Sunday.
- She also wants God's **wisdom** about how to steer WVPC.
- Kim wants anointing of the Holy Spirit and wisdom.
- Kim is not alone in wanting prayer. The Apostle Paul is constantly asking for prayer for himself and his ministry in the epistles.
- This is what Kim wants prayer for at this time but there are **many more things** in a leader's life where they need prayer. Some of these items are **listed in our scripture** for this morning, 1 Tim 3:1-7. There are too many items to cover in a 20 minute sermon. To help with that, I have a **booklet with 33 different prayers** for church leadership that I will give you later as either a booklet or daily email.
- For now let us look at our other leaders – our elders, deacons, and ministry leaders.

What is a Church Leader

- Who does **God choose** to be a leader? **What qualities** does God look for?
- In Genesis 9 God needs someone to lead an effort to **build an ark**. Who does He call upon –**Noah**, a man of the soil.
- When God needs someone to **lead the Israelites** out of Egypt, he chooses Moses, a runaway and shepherd.
- In Judges 6, God chooses **Gideon**, the least in his family but someone who listens to God. Because Gideon listens to God's word, he defeats Midian.
- For His **apostles**, Jesus calls Simon, Andrew James, and John – **fishermen** (Mark 1:16–20).
- We see that God does not choose people experienced in leadership but people who will **listen to Him**.
- Today the requirements of leadership do not speak of skill but of their **relationship to Jesus**.

- **How should we pray for leaders?**
- Should it be “Dear God, please make those clowns listen to my opinion and do what I want?” I have been guilty of this in the past.
- This statement would have a few problems.
 - First, you **judge** them up front as not being good leaders. Give them grace.
 - Secondly, you assume that **you know** what is best for the church. You assume that you know **better than God**. Job can tell you how this is not correct in Job 38 and 42. We need to trust God.
 - Thirdly, **you do not let God act** if you try to shape the church to your image. We need to let God act and form the church in His image.
- Praying for church leaders is **submitting ourselves to God’s will, and letting God act through us**.

pause

- We get one hint of what we should pray by seeing what God looks for in a leader. God calls ordinary people – but they **must be willing** to listen to God. We saw this in Noah, Moses and Gideon.
- **Like the mother** of the newborn, we still **haven’t asked** our leaders what kind of prayers they want. **I did**. A couple of week ago I sent an email to all elders, deacons, and ministry leaders (Terri and Steve) asking them **how we could pray for them**. Here is a summary of what they said.
 - The first reaction was a **simple “thanks for asking.”** This is a gift that we can give, isn’t it? To ask someone what help they need, whether it is physical or spiritual, is a gift we can all give.
 - Some of the answers were at a **higher level**:
 - That they would serve the congregation well in their position or that through their ministry people would feel the love of God.

- I encouraged our leaders to think about how we could pray for them personally. Their responses were:
 - For God to be in **control** and to **hear** the voice of our Lord clearly.
 - For **wisdom**, vision, organization, and to clearly **communicate**.
 - That they be **filled with His spirit**
 - For the Serenity to **accept the things they cannot change**,
 - For the **Courage** to act,
 - Strength and health **for my family**.
 - **Protection** from fear
 - For a Timothy – a **helper**.
 - For **humility**.
- Lastly we cannot forget that our leaders are also **members of the congregation**. The turmoil of the last year has also affected them as it has affected all of us who have seen friends leave. It has left some exhausted. We all need prayers for clarity and a renewed sense of what God wants of us at West Valley.
- There are many things from the Timothy passage that I have **not touched upon**. I did want to **mention briefly** upon verse 7 which mentions the “**devils trap**.” We do not usually dwell upon spiritual warfare at West Valley. I feel that we should **not dwell** upon the devil or give him any undo focus or attention. However, **he is mentioned in scripture**, he is out there, and we must **be on guard** for his efforts. In this respect we must also **pray for protection** from the devil for our leaders.

Booklet

- As you can see, there are a **number of areas** in which you can pray for WVPC’s leaders. Here I have touched upon **but a few** of them. As I mentioned before, I have more areas about where our leaders need prayer. They are listed in this **booklet titled *Intercessory Prayers for our Pastor, leaders and Church***. I **have a copy for you** that you can pick up on your way out this morning. If you are like me and do not want to have yet another piece of paper around, **my email address** is in the bulletin. Send me an email titled “Leadership”, and **I will email back to you one of the prayers** from the booklet each day for the next 33 days. This way **when you get an email**, you can **stop** and **pray** one prayer each day. It will just take a minute or two.

- Let's never forget that **we are a praying church**. Our leaders are **part of our body** and have a **special function** in our body and they **deserve** our support and prayer.
 - Pray for them daily for the **next week** or longer.
 - Pray that they, as individuals,
 - will **submit** themselves to God's will,
 - **listen** to the Holy Spirit,
 - **act** upon God's word as it is revealed to them, and
 - will be **protected** from evil.

Conclusion

- **Please join me in prayer.**
- Dear Jesus, we **thank you** for the individuals whom you have called and who have consented to be leaders at WVPC.
- Give us the right mind to listen to what our leaders need prayer for.
- As representatives of this church on the corner and the universal Christian church, we **ask** that You
 - **Give** them time, strength, and energy to exercise their office,
 - **Pour** out your grace upon them, and
 - **Send** the Holy Spirit upon them,
 - **Protect** them from evil,
 - So that they may **know** your desire for them and for this church.
- **Forgive** us our foolish ways of thinking that **we know best**.
- We **confess** our need of Your **guidance**.
- We **submit** ourselves to Your will.
- We **ask** this in Your mighty name. Amen.

Closing/Benediction

- May Jesus know each of us as a **member** of this church.
- May Jesus know each of us as a **praying member of this community** of faith who honors the different part of the body of this church.
- May this church be known as **having leaders** who are supported in pray and who listen to God's will.
- **Go out**, pray, receive the Holy Spirit and be blessed by the Spirit today and every day.
- **Amen**