The Life and Ministry of the Pastor Part 3

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Preacher: Dr. Michael Staton

[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang. Thank you for joining us.

I told him, I'm just going to quote, I came home, that's what I said to him, I came home and was sitting in my office, in my house paying bills.
I literally fell asleep today while sitting up in my chair paying bills. I woke up very confused. To which he said, were you confused about why you're still paying bills in the year 2024?
Yeah, some of us still write checks, have stamps, and do things the old fashioned way. But I do appreciate your support and your kindness.
I do want you to know, as of two weeks ago, my wife and I are doing several utilities online auto pay now. How about that? I was the only person in our church that didn't do direct deposit for years.
[1:26] And when COVID hit, Audrey said, you know, with COVID, there's 14 day mandatory quarantines. And if you don't go direct deposit, you may not get paid. And so I went to direct deposit pretty quickly.

And so I feel like I'm just, I'm not, I'm like a century behind, but I feel like I'm catching up. I feel like I'm getting there. We're getting there. So I don't know, Joe, if you were checking on me or concerned about me, but I was still paying bills.
This true story, went home this afternoon. I told Mark, I'm going to go pay bills. I fell asleep doing it yesterday, and I absolutely did it again this afternoon. So if you drive by my house and it's kind of dim, that means the electric bill didn't get paid.
But we're working on it. Jeff, it's hard being old, isn't it? I mean, it's just, it's just hard. These young people recover quickly, but you and I are just, yeah.
I'm asleep right now. It's hard to tell. It's hard to tell with Jeff if he's asleep or not. But when John said with the kids choir, he said some of them are needing to go to the bathroom.
[2:30] Some of them are asleep. I thought it was staff meeting all over again. But yeah, we are, we are so thankful for all of you who are able to help us. One of the things we've been doing on many Sunday nights this semester is just having a time of ministry focus, taking some parts of our church that may not be as well known or parts of the church that you may not yourself be a part of and letting you know what they're about.

One, just for information so you can encourage other people that it may be a blessing to them, but also just to let you know how you can better pray for different parts of our church and ministries of our church.
And so tonight, since we had part of our children's choir here singing, I thought it'd be appropriate for Kathy to come and share about Kids Summit, something that we've been doing here for a long, long time that she's the lead on.
So Kathy, come and share with us. We'd love to hear from you tonight. I'm very honest, if y'all know that. Y'all are above fifth grade, so I'm nervous.
If you were fifth and below, it would be great and easy. I'll just be honest. No, I'm honored and thank you, Michael, for letting me come speak tonight. Several years ago, several years ago, Michael had a challenge for me.
[3:43] And he said, what could we do in children's ministry that would be over and above and beyond our normal activities that they have like Awana and Sunday school and Bible school and those normal things?

And so he challenged me to do that. And I thought about it and I prayed about it. I thought, what could that be, Lord? And over and over again, the Lord reminded me, what if we had some kids, because they're taught this at church, but what if we had some kids that you could really pour into

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them the importance of studying their Bible?
Not just to read it, to say it, but to know it, to memorize scripture. What would we do if we could emphasize those spiritual disciplines? So that's the origin of how Kids Summit came about.
What is that? It is an in-depth Bible study for discipleship group for our fourth and fifth grade students only. It's a small group of kids. That's on purpose and intentional.
We meet on the first Friday of the month at our house during the school year. There's a registration to attend and it fills up really quickly. The last three years we've had a waiting list.
[4:48] I have five on that waiting list right now. But it's a great opportunity for kids to be challenged that want to really grow in their spiritual walk with the Lord. So what are our goals?

Our goals are to guide kids to be independent students and learners of God's word as they grow in their spiritual disciplines. We want kids to love spending time alone with God.
Not because their mom's encouraging them. Not because dad's saying you must do this. Not because their teachers are telling them at church. But not a, well, I have to do this, but I can't wait to open the word and see what God's going to teach me.
So not only do we encourage kids to read their Bible, be in the word daily. We give them Bible story, a Bible story, Bible study material to cover that they have to cover during that month.
And we memorize a scripture and we have prayer emphasis. So they have a prayer pile. So each month they get a different prayer pile. And we give them two postcards. Yes, old-fashioned mail.
[5:45] Because kids love getting mail. Because they don't get mail like I did when I was little. So we have an encouraging postcard that they send encouraging note to their prayer pile.

The end result goal that we want is that we want students to have a strong, great habit of spending time with the Lord. We want them to look forward to it. And we want them to expect God to teach them things.
So as we often do inductive Bible study material, we want them to be self-learners. But we always emphasize, before you ever open God's word, before Pastor Michael preaches, I almost said Pastor Michael.
That's hilarious. I almost did. That's an Allie thing. Sorry. I almost did. Before Pastor Michael preaches, before your Awana leaders or your Sunday school teachers, your parents at home teaching you God's word, because that's your primary job.
I want you to pray and ask God, what is it that you want me to gain today? As I read my Bible, what is it that you want me to learn? And so we always emphasize that. But then in inductive Bible study, we tell them you need to observe the passage.
[6:50] What do you learn as you observe this passage? What is the interpretation? What is it that God's trying to teach me and help me to learn? And then most importantly, I have to apply it. Because James 1.22 is really clear about that.

I can't just read it and study it, but I have to do what it says and apply it in my life so that I can be a great student of the word. We emphasize that scripture is the best interpreter of scripture.
And we talk about how we can go to different parts of the Bible to learn about that same concept and enhance our learning of what God's teaching us. We learn that scripture never contradicts scripture.
It's not going to say one thing in one part of the Bible and contradict itself in another. So how can your child be a part? We already started. Our classes are full. You can get on the waiting list if you want.
But what I want you to know, if you have a third grader now, next year right after promotion, we start sign-ups for Kids Summit. And I would love to answer any more questions for you about that.
[7:47] But one thing I want you to know is not every parent can get to my house from 4 to 5 on the first Friday of every month. And I totally realize that. And I acknowledge that. So I want to remind you guys that you can do these same things in your home that so many of you are doing.

And I know that because your kids recall the teaching you're doing at home. And if you don't know much about children's ministry at First Baptist Mustang, I want you to know that we have an amazing team of leaders who are intentional as they teach the Bible to teach biblical truth.
They're wonderful at reminding kids the importance of memorizing scripture and the importance of praying for one another. And so when your kids are here, they are well taught biblical truth.
I couldn't stop without saying how wonderful my husband is. I like to take every opportunity to tell them that. That's when I get emotional. But Gary's the bomb. He's amazing.

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He works from home, if you don't know that. And he allows these kids to flood our living room. And he allows them to be apart. And he doesn't complain. He doesn't gripe. He loves them almost as much as I do.
[8:49] Not quite, but almost. And he does this work. So thank you, sweetheart, for allowing them to come into our home. And then a huge shout out to all the parents. I'm not going to start calling off names because over all these years, I would miss parents that helped.

And our youth. Man, those of you, some of you college students, you know who you are, that have helped me with kids in the past. And some of our youth that are currently helping me, those kids look up to you guys.
You guys are way cooler than Miss Kathy, I promise. And so when our youth come in and invest and help me with Kids Summit, it makes a really, really, really big difference.
But the main thing I want to leave you with is we are all commanded to be learners of God's word. So I challenge you as parents. I challenge me as a grandma now that it's our chore and it's our desire and it's our love for the Lord to help our kids to learn.
And that we don't want them to be forced to check off a list, but we want them to enjoy and desire to say God's word and learn more about him. Thank you guys so much. Thanks, Pastor Michael.
[9:56] Kathy has served on our staff for 24 years. The whole time I've been here, we both started when we were 10, which is remarkable that they let us do that, but open with me to 1 Thessalonians chapter 3.

1 Thessalonians 3. We are treating this chapter, as we walk through this light of this chapter as a whole, but going through it in a few parts just because of time.
But the whole chapter really is talking about the life and ministry of the shepherd of God's people. How do we do ministry? What kinds of things must we be aware of?
Whether you are a pastor by vocation, whether you are one who leads Sunday school, if you are just shepherding children in your home, however you are shepherding the people of God, there are some things that come with that.
To be a pastor essentially is to be a shepherd. So the things a shepherd does are the things that the pastor should do. And what that would be is teach and defend and correct and provide and feed and lead.
[11:13] And so whoever you're shepherding, these things should be true for all of us. So we're going to look at the last portion of chapter 3, but just a very brief reminder of the headings we've used to help you have the flow of chapter 3.

We first in verses 1 to 4 looked at the pastor's pain, the pain of ministry. We observed how chapter 2 verse 20 speaks of joy, and yet chapter 3 verses 1 to 4 speaks of affliction.
Both of these are part of the life of ministry. There is great joy and there is affliction. Both of these are always true. Part of the joy of doing God's work is seeing how the Lord brings great good even from affliction.
And so these aren't necessarily separate things. They're often mingled together. But everybody understands that as taught a class or led a Bible study or raised children in the ways of the Lord, that there is pain involved.
There's joy, but there's also pain and there's affliction, and the Bible tells us that. Second, we looked in verse 5 at the pastor's problem.
[12:31] For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain.

The problem for the pastor here in verse 5 is the ongoing threat of the evil one. The ongoing desire for our enemy to lead us astray.
And this is why those of us who are striving together to serve God's people must be vigilant. This is why every day matters. There's certainly nothing wrong with taking a vacation or taking a break from the norm.
I understand that. But as much as, as many hours as we've put in this week, as a church, as a staff, as a leadership team, tomorrow morning at 8.35, we'll be where we always are on Mondays at 8.35. In our conference room, Bible's open, reading the Bible out loud. That's how we start every week.
And the reason for that is while we've had a wonderful week the last few days and had a chance to minister to many people, there's ministry that's in front of us this week.

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[13:46] And you don't take days off. That doesn't mean that individuals can't take days off. You understand what I'm saying. But as a church, the ministry continues. Every Sunday school teacher in our church that you labored to, whether you were teaching four-year-olds or fourth graders or adults, you studied this week, you labored, you taught, you gave your class everything you had this morning.

But as soon as you wake up tomorrow, you're on the countdown to next Sunday. And the study has to continue. And the ministry has to continue. And one of the problems we have to just acknowledge, those of us who are trying to do God's work together, is that there's always challenges.
There's always threats. And we understand that. And we want to be honest with ourselves that we have to care for those among us because we don't want the tempter to come and lead them astray.
Third, we looked at the pastor's promise in verses 6 to 8. It says, But now that Timothy has come to us from you and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us as we long to see you.
For this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction, we have been comforted about you through your faith. For now we live if you are standing fast in the Lord.
[15:13] This is the promise we have that there's the strength-giving blessing of seeing the people you're serving and laboring over, seeing them grow and stand fast in the Lord.

It was amazing to me to watch the last several days at our conference. We had people serving here that have been here for decades. And we had people serving here who were brand new to our church.
We had people serving here who were very young. And we had people serving here who have put their time in that could have just as easily said somebody else can do that. But what an immense joy it is to walk through the hallways of our church and see people who are standing fast.
Use the language of verse 8. Standing fast in the Lord. It's a military term we looked at last week that means that you don't retreat. You hold your post.
You're where you're supposed to be. It's just an amazing thing. This morning, as many people as were here even just yesterday serving, this morning is the Lord's Day.
[16:21] We're right back at it. And some of the same people who were here serving yesterday were here serving today. This church that had been gloriously invaded by hundreds of people the last week.

We had to get everything cleaned up yesterday to have service today. And let me just say what I said in my sermon to the conference yesterday. I didn't take the trash out between yesterday and this morning.
Somebody else did that. I didn't take chairs and re-put them where they go. Somebody else did that. I didn't get classrooms or the fellowship center or the youth center that had been changed around for the conference.
I'm not the one that was in there doing that. It takes all of the church. And while there may just be a small number of people whose names are known who are up in front of people, I assure you any of us who are up in front of people absolutely could not do what we're called to do if the entire body wasn't functioning.
So this morning, I came to church and I saw all kinds of servants right here at the church doing what they do every single Lord's Day.
[17:37] And if we don't have men and women with our preschoolers, their parents are going to stay in here for the preaching. And I'm not the one outside driving golf carts for people who haven't parked so far away to be able to come in.

Someone else is doing that. I'm not the one holding the doors open for moms with baby carriers and parents with multiple children, somebody else at all those doors. It's just the body of Christ serving. It's a beautiful thing to watch. And part of the promise we have is the glory when, as verse 8 says, we are all standing fast in our faith, standing fast at our post, not retreating, doing what we are each called and gifted to do.
That brings us finally to the last part of chapter 3, the pastor's prayer. The pastor's prayer. And there are a few parts of this prayer that I want you to notice with me.
Let me read it and then show you a few aspects of the prayer that I hope will help us think of how we can pray even this week. Verse 9 says, For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you?

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[18:53] For all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God, as we pray most earnestly night and day, that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith.

Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you, and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all as we do for you, so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father.
Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints. First, we see thanksgiving. What thanksgiving can we return to God for you for the joy we feel?
A shepherd's heart should express itself in thanksgiving and in joy. And this becomes what we might think of as a circle of worship, because the more you pray for someone, the more you care about them.
The more you care about them, the more you pray for their spiritual needs. The more you see them growing in Christ, the more thankful you become. The more thankful you become, the more joy you have.
[20:07] And it just becomes a circle of worship. It's an amazing thing to watch people grow in the Lord. And we want to take time to be thankful people.

So when we pray, as you lift up your needs to the Lord as you should, as you pray for the needs of others as you should, don't forget, brothers and sisters, don't forget to be thankful.
Be thankful, people. Be thankful, of course, first to the Lord. James 1 tells us every good and perfect gift comes from above. Be thankful to the Lord.
Thankfulness takes time. How long does it take you to get angry? One second? You're at the light. The person in front of you doesn't go. It turns green. That didn't take long. Somebody pulls it in front of you. Doesn't take long. A child rolls their eyes when you tell them to do something.
[21:39] That didn't take long. That didn't take long. But thankfulness takes time. Thankfulness demands that you stop and you look around you and say, God, let me consider what all you've done for me.

One of my favorite things that is a youth minister, we used to have a prayer and praise vigil. We would pray from 8 to midnight every so often. And what we would do in that prayer and praise vigil is I would give our students a piece of paper and a pen, and I would tell them they have 30 minutes. The first 30 minutes they had to write down things they were thankful for. No break. 30 minutes. And once you got past home and food and friends and, you know, a parent or two, they were like, I think I'm out.
And I was like, well, you've got 29 and a half more minutes to go. And you would just train, trying to train them to be thankful, to think about all the Lord has done. And at the end of that half hour, they had so many things that maybe for the first time in their life, they had given thanks to the Lord for. But thankfulness takes time. Our prayers are filled with thanksgiving. Second, there is an aspect of our prayers that we describe as they should have fervency. Verse 10, as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face.
[23:05] We pray earnestly. This is not a passing prayer. This is not a hurried prayer. This is praying earnestly. This is praying night and day.

And again, earnest prayer, like thanksgiving, takes time. If you're going to be faithful in prayer, it demands to be a priority in your life.
It takes time to be fervent in prayer. If you're really going to try to minister to people, you've got to pray for them.
When people tell me, Pastor, I'm praying for you, that is an unbelievable encouragement to me. Because I know it takes time to do that.
And we want to be fervent in prayer. And you cannot be fervent in prayer quickly. You can't. To be fervent in prayer demands that you're saying no to some other things.
[24:12] You have to. If you're going to be fervent in prayer, there has to be other things that you just put aside. Purposeful neglect is required to be fervent in prayer.

There's a third aspect of the prayer, and that is lifting up personal requests. Verse 11. Now may our God and Father Himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you.
This was His request. He wanted to be reunited with them. We've talked about that the last number of weeks. Just a quick note here on the language of verse 11.
Let me read it again. Now may our God and Father Himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. It's a compound subject. God and Father Himself and Lord Jesus Christ is a compound

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subject.
But it's a singular verb, direct. One verb, compound subject. Which points to us the unity in the Godhead.
[25:13] Points to us the deity of the Son. It also speaks of the familial relationship of God's people when it says, Our God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

That those who know the Lord, whether they live in your same city or not, they're a part of your family. This week, our church had hundreds of people here from literally all across the nation.
But there is a bond and a unity among people who are believers in Christ. And though you may not know their background, I may not know all of their story, there is a bond when you are a believer and they are a believer, and you both know your sinners saved by grace, there is a familial bond that exists there.
Which is why the last three days after sessions, those people were coming up to me that I don't even know, asking me would I pray for them. And I got to pray for all kinds of people, and they don't know me, and I don't know them.
The only thing we knew is that we both were believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. And that makes us family. That unites us together.
[26:25] This is one of the reasons why every single church must labor hard to keep relationships a priority.

You just cannot live out New Testament commands in isolation. It's just impossible. And so we lift up our personal request.
Now I do want to point this out. It absolutely is fitting and good for you to lift your request to the Lord. Not only do we see it here in 1 Thessalonians 3, we see it in James 4.2.
You have not because you ask not, James 4 says. So it's fitting and proper to lift up your request to the Lord. But I do want to say, I think it's very helpful, and I think it's quite instructive for us to offer thanksgiving first.
Because when you don't offer thanksgiving first, when you start with your personal requests, your mind's going to be so consumed with what you don't have or the circumstance you're praying about that you wish were different.
[27:39] But when you train your heart and your mind in prayer to pray fervently and to be thankful, once you have taken time to recount to the Lord how grateful you are for all that He's done for you, for all that He's provided for you, that doesn't mean that you don't come back and offer that request up to the Lord, but you may just view that need slightly different.

When you remind yourself of how faithful He's been, you're far more trusting. When you remind yourself of how He's come through so many times in the past, you rest in His providence so much more sweetly.
And when you remind yourself of thankfulness even from the hard seasons you've been through, it may be that instead of saying, Lord, remove this from me no matter what, your prayer may change a bit to say, Lord, would you teach me through this no matter what?
Beginning with a thankful heart changes everything. I mean, I don't hide this, that if I had my way every single time I didn't feel well, I would be over it in one second.
If I had my way every single time something was frustrating, it would go away in one second. If I had my way, every single obstacle I encounter would be removed in a second.
[29:08] But if that happened, I would be the most shallow person you've ever met. Because we need to understand how to be faithful in frustration. We need to understand how to be faithful when we don't feel well physically.

We need to understand what commitment looks like when you keep showing up and keep doing what God's called you to do even in the face of conflict. We need to understand that we need to be faithful in prayer.
And if we're not faithful in prayer, we're not going to accomplish anything of significance anyway.
But if everything were instantly removed that was a frustration, you wouldn't need to pray. And you certainly wouldn't need to pray fervently.
But the Scriptures called us to be earnest in prayer, faithful in prayer, which means even for the disappointments in your life, there's a prayer of thanksgiving to pray. But to pray like that demands time.

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So we want to be thankful. We want to be fervent. We do offer up the requests that are on our hearts. Verse four, or number four, we want to pray for Christ honoring love.
[30:23] Look at verse 12. And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all as we do for you.

This is a prayer that the church would grow in love. If you don't pray that way for our church, I invite you to begin to do so.
Pray that our church would grow in love. We rejoice when God brings us new members. We're thankful for that. Later this month or soon, in the next several weeks, maybe the first of November, we've got another really great group, a big group of new members to present.
We are so excited to welcome them to our church. We love when the Lord adds to our family. We love when we get to see baptisms as we've seen very recently week after week. We're thankful for that.
We want to see our church grow with salvation and grow with new members. We love that. It's a great joy. But we want to pray also that we would be growing in love.
[31:33] Of course, love for Christ, yes. But look at verse 12. May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all. May the Lord give you a heart to love each other.

And while you're at it, may the Lord give us a heart to just be able to show love to everybody. This is a great way to pray for each other. This reminds us that part of the spiritual battle that we are to be engaged in is a battle to be loving to people.
We want to be precise in our doctrine. We want to train people biblically and theologically, but it's got to be lived out with people.
And we've got to pray that we would grow in love. You're familiar with John 13, 35. By this, all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.
Romans 12, 18. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. If possible. May not be possible.
[32:46] As much as depends on you. But a relationship's a two-way street. But it just teaches us that we want to be praying that we would be loving people. And you say, well, what if someone else isn't loving in return to me?

If possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with them. And if you find that hard, all the more reason why you need people to be praying for you and you for them, that we would be loving people.
Not just to those we are close to, but for all. He is showing us in this prayer that we are praying not just for love to exist, but for love to increase.
Verse 12, make you increase and abound in love. We want to be a loving church, but we want to be increasing in love.
Abounding in love. I mean, if you're married, you don't want your love to be like sand in an hourglass, where you start off up here and it just gets lower and lower, and you think, oh my goodness, how long are we going to both be alive?
[34:00] We're running out of sand here. You want to be increasing, abounding. But to love like that, you need to pray for that.

You need to pray for each other. And there's a fifth thing, and that's holiness. Verse 13, we pray to increase in love.
Verse 13, so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness. Do you pray for your kids like this? When you're praying for your kids to make good grades, when you're praying for your kids to make a friend, when you're praying for your kids to succeed in the ball field, when you're praying for your kids with all these things, do you pray for your kids to be holy?
If you want to know how to pray for your kids, just look at verse 13 and make this a practice of your life. That he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness. If you want to say, how do you be fervent in prayer, pray verse 13.
You can't pray verse 13 once. It's impossible. Because once you start to care about the holiness of your kids, it begins to consume you.
[35:24] You will pray fervently if your heart's desire is the holiness of your children. This is a prayer for inward purity.

If your kid's lonely at school, you bet pray for them to make a friend. Nothing wrong with that. If your kid's applying for a scholarship, you bet. Let's pray that the Lord would open that door if it's His will.

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Absolutely. Absolutely. But let's not neglect the things that matter even more. Pray for their holiness.
And this will give you endurance as a parent because you know from your own life that trials grow you.
But it's hard to watch your kids go through a trial, isn't it? I mean, as a parent, you want to fix it. You want to solve it. You want to take it away.
[36:23] But what if instead we just fervently pray to God that the Lord would use even this season of hardship in your child's life to form within them holiness?

That's a very different prayer, isn't it? Lord, I want my child to be holy. I want them to know you better.
I want them to love you more. I want them to be established in their hearts. And so now, in the midst of the trial, rather than being angry or frustrated, the trial's not getting resolved earlier, you're looking for evidence of how God is using this to build holiness and maturity and depth within your children.
But every parent here is the same in this regard. Lord, I know. We want our children to feel better. This is why we have to be prayerful for them.
Because how many people on this planet do you know that will fervently pray for your child's holiness? Not many.
[37:49] Make sure they have you. Grandparents, you're wanting to know how can I best help my grandchildren. They don't need all your money.

Your children probably do. That in-between generation. Your grandkids don't need all your money. Not yet anyway. It'll ruin them. They don't need you to tell them they're perfect.
They're not perfect. I'll tell you what you can be. A fervent prayer warrior on their behalf that they would be holy.
You pass that down to your grandkids, you've given them something far more precious than anything of this world.
pray for holiness. I can't help but wonder how little these things get prayed for.
[39:03] Praying that people would love, praying that people would increase in their love, praying that people would be holy. But this is how we're to pray. 1 Peter 1, 13-16 says, Therefore, preparing your minds for action and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that we brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ as obedient children.

Do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as He who called you is holy, so also be holy in all your conduct.
Let that be the way we pray for our children. Teach your kids to read, teach your kids math, teach your kids how to handle money, teach your kids how to take care of themselves.
Those are great things. You need to be able to do that. Teach your kids how to do house repairs or be like me and just marry someone who knows, one or the other.
But I'll tell you what you've got to do. You've got to pray for your children to be holy. Who else is going to? Sunday school teachers, pray for your class to be holy, abounding in love.
[40:31] For every one of you that take your children to a Sunday school class every Sunday and you drop them off to men and women there who love your kids and teach them, pray for your teachers that they would abound in love and that they would be holy.

Pray for your pastors this way. This isn't just a way that pastors pray for their people. You pray for your pastors this way. Pray that we would be loving people. Pray that we would be holy people.
When somebody asked me how can I pray for you years ago, I don't even, this may be original to me, I have no idea.
I may have read this from someone, I have no idea. But for years when someone has said how can I pray for you, if there's nothing pressing, I always say pray for three things for me.
Pray that I would be humble because frankly living your life on a platform in front of people is always a threat for pride and prideful shepherds fall.
[41:38] So I always say pray that I would be humble. Pray that I would be holy because I don't want to just teach things that are true. I want these to be things that are true in me. And third, I say pray that I would be happy in Christ, that I wouldn't be chasing things of the world, that I truly would see Christ as sufficient for my joy.

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pray. Humble, holy, and happy in Christ. And if you want to give a gift to your leaders, pray for those things.
Because if the leaders of a church aren't holy, that church is in trouble. No one may know for a while, but that church is in trouble.
If you've got shepherds who don't love sheep, if you've got pastors and leaders in the church who just see the members as pawns in an organization to move around, if they don't really love their congregation, that church is in trouble.
The programming of the church may be enough to mask it for a while, but eventually that tree is coming down. Your leaders need to love and increase in love, and they need to be holy.
[43:04] And you're praying for your leaders to have those characteristics. The leaders are praying for the people they serve to have those things. And that's kind of how you abound in love for each other, because you're praying for my deepest needs, and I'm praying for your deepest needs, and if we really spend time doing that, our greatest desire is that we all make it to the finish line together.

That's why we pray. But that kind of prayer takes time, doesn't it? You can't pray that prayer for 15 minutes when you're just walking into the office.
You can't just sit in your car for a few minutes. It takes time. Pray on the go? Sure. Pray whenever needs arise? Absolutely. You got 30 seconds to pray?
That's great. You got 10 minutes to pray? That's great. Pray whenever you can. Pray without ceasing. But the way to pray without ceasing is to build into your life time where you can pray deep in prayer, because this kind of spiritual battle is not done fast.
It's deliberate. It's purposeful. But it takes time. But that's the pastor's prayer.
[44:31] Filled with thanksgiving. Fervent. Offering up our requests and our specific needs before the Lord.

That we would increase in love. And that we would be holy. You want to give a gift to somebody this week? Pray like that for them.
Lord, your word is good. As Jeff read to us from Psalm 119 a few moments ago, it is the delight of our hearts. And we pray that we would this week honor you by obeying your word.
May we be a prayerful people. We ask it in Christ's name. Amen. Love you, church family. Have a great week. You're dismissed. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you.
God bless you. God bless you.
[45:37] God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you.

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