

“If You Don’t Pray – You Don’t Deserve To Lead”

Pastor Ron McKey

If you don’t pray – you don’t deserve to lead! I hope that statement offends you or even better; I hope it makes you angry, angry enough to start you and your church on a significant prayer journey. My intent in this article is not to hold your hand or cheer you on with sweet words of encouragement to a more fulfilling prayer life. My intent however, is to be hardcore and **in your face** about what you already know you should be doing. I, too, am a pastor, and I know exactly what you’re feeling and for the most part, what you’re facing. I know the pressures, the schedules and the demands of ministry. So let’s not play games about why we don’t pray. Let’s embrace the truth even if it hurts.

The truth is, we don’t pray because we’re too busy, too lazy or we simply don’t care. You and I both know we don’t need just another book on prayer. We’ve read and highlighted most of them already, but still we are not praying. **We have prayer books, prayer tapes, prayer calendars, prayer meetings and prayer lunches, yet we still don’t pray.**

We are in a prayer crisis in our churches and in our ministries. We have the mechanics of and the blueprint for prayer, but we don’t have a working model. We don’t have a meaningful prayer ministry in our church.

If you, as a pastor are not involved in personal prayer, how can you ever expect to lead God’s people? It’s insane! **This article is a wake up call to all of us.** We are shooting ourselves in the foot and blaming the devil for all our problems.

According to “PRAY” magazine, the average pastor in America prays seven minutes a day. “Facts & Trends” magazine found only 16% of protestant ministers are satisfied with their prayer life. It’s time to take responsibility for our lack of prayer. There is a leadership principle that states; “most people don’t change because they see light, but because they feel the heat.” Our churches are feeling the heat, the effects of our prayerlessness and our lack of organized prayer.

If you are not teaching your people to pray, you are failing them as a pastor. You are denying them access to the supernatural power of God. It is your responsibility to equip your members to live victoriously. **This is done by teaching them to pray and by introducing them to a relationship with a supernatural God.**

So, if you are ready to begin this trek into prayer and leading others on this journey with you, lay your feelings aside. If you read something that hurts your feelings; **“build a bridge and get over it.”**

Answering the Call to Pray

We are so full of ourselves. We love to preach and we love to hear ourselves talk. We think our good preaching, good looks, great personalities, or our leadership skills are what are going to grow our church. We trust more in charisma, than we do in character;

trust more in personality, than we do prayer. **We couldn't be more wrong!** Psalm 127:1, "Unless the Lord builds the house, you are laboring in vain." Jesus said; "My house shall be called a house of prayer". Yet, we often think offering up another program will get the job done.

Do you remember when you answered the call to ministry? You were so obsessed with serving God that you really couldn't see or imagine yourself doing anything else but ministry. Do you remember the emotions, the level of commitment and the desire to fulfill that calling? You probably began some sort of preparation process that included Bible study, reading books, finding a mentor and enrolling in Bible school. The point is this; you began to prepare yourself for the calling on your life.

There is another calling upon your life besides that of a pastor or a leader. It is the call to pray. It is a higher calling that even the call to ministry or to preach the gospel. **In prayer you will reach more people, change more lives and be more powerful** than you could ever be just standing behind the pulpit preaching.

If you only answer the call to preach and not the call to pray, then you will limit your ministry to half of what is possible. If you preach without praying, your messages will be weak. If you lead without prayer; your leadership will continually lack. If you serve without prayer; you will grow tired and frustrated.

Answer the call to pray then become a student of prayer. The disciples said, "Lord teach us how to pray." This simply means that prayer can be both taught and learned. You need to do both. You need to learn how to pray and be able to teach others what you know.

As you did for ministry, you will need to prepare for this calling. You need to study the prayers of the Bible. Read books and articles on prayer. Fill yourself up with the knowledge of prayer.

You will not properly direct your ministry or lead with any degree of clarity without an effective prayer life. **Prayer is like the headlights of a car.** Headlights allow you to see where you are going and to see what may be approaching. Leading without praying, makes about as much sense as driving a car at night without headlights. You are an accident waiting to happen.

Motivational speaker, Earl Nightingale once said to his audience; "If you read 500 books on any subject you will become a world renowned expert on that subject." If you begin to read and study on the subject of prayer; you will become the ultimate authority in your church. Start praying! If ministry is hard... pray! If your church is struggling... pray! If you need finances... pray! If you hit a barrier... pray. If no one loves you... pray! **Stop whining and start praying!** If you don't pray- you don't deserve to lead. No one wants to follow a leader whose spiritual life is running on empty. You can't lead people where you haven't been yourself.

If You Don't Pray - You Won't Last

Ministry is too hard and life is too short to try to get through it without prayer! You will not make it. You will burn out, stress out, or strike out. If you are trying to do everything in your own strength, without prayer, you will go down in flames.

Not only that, but on a personal level, if you're not praying - you're straying. Every day you continue not to pray is another day you choose to walk just a little further from God. Prayer is the umbilical cord that keeps you attached to God's presence and influence.

You can't help others get closer to God when you are avoiding Him like the plague yourself. How can you possibly think you could ever be successful without prayer in your life? The fact is; you know I am right (which proves the point you are being lazy)! Ask yourself this question, "Why am I beating my head against the wall by denying myself the power of prayer?" Don't look at prayer as a last resort but rather as a first response.

There is a popular catch phrase we thrown around quite often; "think outside the box." In other words; don't be limited in your way of thinking, or don't tie yourself down with traditional ways of doing things. Let me introduce you to a new catch phrase; **"think inside the vine."** To think inside the vine is to abide in Christ and immerse yourself in prayer to the point that you are no longer limited to just your resources or ideas.

Jesus said, "I am the vine, you are the branches, if you abide in me and my word abides in you, then whatever you ask in my name, the Father will do it for you." Life outside the vine is hard and dry. My advice is not to live there.

I don't doubt you are trying to do a good job and your intentions are to succeed, but give me a break. What is it going to take to get you to pray? Let me list for you the cold hard facts.

- 1,500 pastors leave the ministry each month due to moral failure, spiritual burnout or contention in their churches.
- 50% of pastors' marriages will end in divorce.
- 70% of pastors constantly fight depression.
- 50% are so discouraged they would leave the ministry if they could, but have no other way of making a living.
- 85% said their greatest problem is they are sick and tired of dealing with problem people; such as disgruntled, elders, deacons, worship elders, worship teams, board members and associate pastors.
- 70% felt God called them to pastoral ministry before their ministry began, but after three years of ministry, only fifty percent still feel called.

Give Prayer a Time and Place of Importance

You say prayer is important to you, but is it really? Oftentimes there is a huge gap between what we say we believe and our actions. If prayer is important to you then show it. Put your money where your mouth is by investing in prayer.

Creating a culture of prayer in your church is a lot like telling your children you love them. You can tell your kids you love them but the message doesn't really come through until you show them you love them. Every parent knows that youth and children don't spell *love* l-o-v-e; they spell *love* t-i-m-e and m-o-n-e-y. Time and money demonstrate investment.

Show your church you value prayer by investing time and money into developing this ministry. Let's break it down and look at both.

TIME

You have to set a time for corporate prayer in your church. The early church in the book of Acts had a set time to pray together. "Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour" Acts 3:1.

Once you establish a time, stick to it. Don't move it around or make it be and the mercy of every other event on the calendar. When you do this, it devalues prayer by letting everything else have priority. Developing consistency also allows your church family the opportunity to incorporate the time into their schedules.

Another huge mistake is letting other events be scheduled simultaneously with prayer. If this is done, your emphasis on prayer and having people buy into your vision will be watered down. **Don't make your people have to choose over prayer.** Instruct staff not to schedule meetings or other events that conflict with the time of corporate prayer. Teach people to sanctify that time.

Sanctify is one of those real religious words that sounds complicated, but really isn't. It simply means to be set aside for God's use. Setting aside one hour for the purpose of creating and developing a prayer ministry is a small sacrifice compared to all the benefits you will reap in return.

MONEY

Spend some money in order to launch prayer in your church. Invest in areas that can help build the prayer culture such as adding a sound system, attending seminars, inviting guest speakers and purchasing training materials. You may have to remodel a room, put down some new carpet or repaint. So what? It should have been kept up to date in the first place.

You will never find a better return on your investment. No dollar amount could ever be equated with how prayer will positively affect your ministry and increase the effectiveness of your church.

Conclusion

It all begins with you, the pastor. The only way to have a successful prayer ministry is for you to lead it. If you don't throw your weight and influence toward this ministry, it will never succeed. If you don't – it won't.

I know it may seem strange, but people like the idea that their pastor prays. It means a lot to them. I can think of no quicker way to win their hearts than for them to know you are praying for them and seeking God for direction in leading them.

E.M. Bounds says in his book, *Power through Prayer*, “We are constantly on a stretch if not a strain, to produce new methods, new plans, new organizations to advance the church and secure enlargement and efficiency. But men are God's method. The church is looking for better methods. God is looking for better men.”

The apostles realized they had to give themselves to pray in order to successfully do the work God had called them to do (Acts 6:1-7). In order for the Word to multiply, your church to grow and your people to develop, you as a leader need to stay focused on prayer. Do not allow yourself to be distracted. The demands of leadership are great, and no way can you accomplish them without prayer. Remember to think inside the vine.

We all know; nothing happens until someone provides leadership. We also know; everything rises and falls on leadership. Without prayer, what type of leadership are we providing? Leadership through prayer is the only way to successfully lead your church. A leader obviously does more than pray...but he doesn't do anything until he prays.

Pastor Ron McKey
Cornerstone Church
9900 S.E. 15th
Midwest City, OK 73110
www.cornerstone.tv
www.RonMcKey.com