

Becoming a Praying Leader

Detailed Outline *Part 1 of 3*

We are looking at the elder's personal life and growth in Christ. It is important for the elder to realize he must first of all guard himself spiritually. After he guards his own soul, he is able to guard the souls of other people. What we want to look at in our next three messages is the life of prayer as it relates to a shepherd elder and his shepherd ministry.

Acts 6:4: **But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.**

The word **devote** connotes "a steadfast and single-minded fidelity to a certain course of action."

Note that the first thing the apostles say is, "**we will devote ourselves to prayer.**" We often skip this first point.

Acts 2:42: **But they devoted themselves to the apostles' teachings and fellowship and to the breaking of bread and the prayers.** The first church was marked by prayer. The leaders also have to be marked by and model prayer.

However, the first thing to go in a super-busy life is prayer. Thus, I want to look at a strategic verse for prayer for elders. But first the context: spiritual warfare.

Ephesians 6:10: **Finally, be strong in the Lord and the strength in his might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.**

Ephesian 6:12: **For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil and heavenly places.**

If you are a pastor elder, you are on the front line of spiritual warfare. And thus, everything you do in the Christian life is dependent on a life of prayer. Observe carefully how Paul ends his pointed message on spiritual warfare and spiritual armor:

Ephesians 6:18: **Praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.**

I've broken this passage into six lessons for prayer. Lesson #1 for a leader's prayer life:

I. Always Be Creative in Your Prayer Life.

Ephesians 6:18 says, "**With all prayer and petition.**" In other words, with every kind of prayer and petition. There are all kinds of prayers, all kinds of positions and postures and circumstances:

"We may pray publicly or privately; in loud cries, or soft whispers, or silently; deliberately and planned or spontaneously; while sitting, standing, kneeling, or even lying down; at home or in

church; while working, while traveling; with hands folded or raised; with eyes open or closed; with head bowed or erect. The New Testament, like the Old, mentions many forms, circumstances, and postures for prayer but prescribes none.” (John MacArthur, Ephesians, 379)

Be creative in your prayer life. Don't fall into a prayer rut. Let me suggest some creative ideas from the prayer masters of how to bring new vitality to your prayer life.

1. Pray out loud.

To bring more life to your prayers, pray out loud. Don't just pray silently. Very often, it's hard to concentrate on prayer. Our minds wander; we think of all the busy activities we have throughout the day. Our minds go off, and we just repeat the same old words and phrases.

2. Walk and pray.

If you can, get out into nature and walk—under a tree, by a lake or a river, or on a mountainside. It will lift your heart in prayer.

3. Pray Scripture back to God.

If you feel you can't find better words or phrases to talk to God in prayer (you have fallen into the same old rut of vocabulary), remember that God loves to hear His Word prayed back to him. Take what you are reading in Scripture and use those words to speak to the Lord. You can't go wrong when you pray the Word of God.

4. Pray shorter prayers.

You don't have to pray eloquent, long prayers to please God.

5. Use a prayer guide or a prayer book.

There are wonderful prayers that have been written. You could use those to help you in your prayer life and bring new life and vocabulary to it. Don't be afraid to pray other people's prayers. Make them your own!

Also use a prayer guide to lead you in your intercessory prayer ministry, so you don't forget what to pray for.

6. Use hymns and Christian songs.

A wonderful way to enliven your prayers is to start by singing. Very often our hearts are cold, we are not ready for prayer, or we don't feel like praying. Start by singing.

The main thing is this: Do not fall into a prayer rut.

In closing, listen to this powerful quotation by D. A. Carson:

“What is both surprising and depressing is the sheer prayerlessness that characterizes so much of the Western church. It is surprising because it is out of step with the Bible that portrays what the Christian living should be; it is depressing because it frequently coexists with abounding Christian activity that somehow seems hollow, frivolous, and superficial.”
(D. A. Carson, *Praying with Paul: A Call to Spiritual Reformation*, ix)

As shepherds of people, everything we do is dependent upon prayer. Guard your prayer life. Do not let busyness rob you of your prayers. Be like the Lord Jesus, a man of prayer.