

“I’m Tired, Boss”: Thoughts on Praying for Pastors

By Pastor Bret Hammond

In the movie, *The Green Mile*, Tom Hanks’s character is tasked with executing the prisoner, John Coffey. He knows Coffey is innocent and, as he puts it, “one of God’s miracles.” When he asks John Coffey if he understands what’s happening and if he’s ready, Coffey responds:

“I’m tired, boss. Tired of being on the road, lonely as a sparrow in the rain. I’m tired of never having a buddy to be with, to tell me where we’s going to, coming from or why. Mostly, I’m tired of people being ugly to each other. I’m tired of all the pain I feel and hear in the world every day. There’s too much of it. It’s like pieces of glass in my head, all the time.”

I recently listened to those lines and wondered, did John Coffey just describe pastoral ministry? Earlier this year, the Barna Institute released statistics on the well-being of pastors since 2020. They found that three out of ten pastors say they are struggling with their emotional well-being, and 26% say they are struggling with their relational well-being. 41% said they had felt sad over the past week, 39% felt panicked, and 51% said they are tired. “I’m tired, boss.” 43% are lonely, “lonely as a sparrow in the rain.”

When pointing to the stresses of their jobs, it’s not their pastoral calling that is causing the stress. Instead, it’s the turmoil in our churches and our nations. In the last two years, pastors had to navigate various opinions about a pandemic, speaking equally into the lives of church members at odds with each other. We’ve had to navigate political turmoil

that has pitted Christian against Christian. We've had horrible things said to us and about us when we don't share the opinions of others. "I'm tired of people being ugly to each other. I'm tired of all the pain I feel and hear in the world every day."

In the last year, 42% of pastors have considered quitting the full-time ministry (I'm convinced many of the others aren't being honest in their response). Go to your church, ask your pastor how they are doing and when they say, "I'm fine," pull them aside and say, "No, really . . . How are you doing?" Pledge to be a safe person for your pastor. Pray for them, encourage them. The simplest word of encouragement can make all the difference.

The author of Hebrews offers these words as his final prayer. In Hebrews 13:18-21, he writes, "Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things. I urge you the more earnestly to do this in order that I may be restored to you the sooner. Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."

Let us pray with him:

Father, we pray, as your word calls us to, for our pastors, those who deliver your word to us, care for us in our struggles, share Christ with the lost, and keep watch over our souls. We pray for those who have devoted their lives to your calling above all else. We pray because they are tired and lonely. We pray because we have often asked them to fill our lives, pouring themselves out, and we have not poured ourselves into them. We pray, and we repent.

I pray that we bring them peace when others bring them turmoil. I pray we offer them trusted friendship when others offer gossip and suspicion. I pray that through our encouragement and support, we will allow them to see that the joy they anticipated when they first accepted their call from you is real. Flood their hearts with that joy, Lord. And may the peace we bring to their lives and to our churches be a foretaste of the union we experience with you in heaven. On earth, as it is in heaven, Lord. It's in Jesus's name we pray. Amen.

Please be a part of the answer to our prayer, by praying regularly for your pastor. (See Below for some guides to use to help you pray for your pastor.)

Bret Hammond is the pastor of Kansas Christian Church in Kansas, IL and the author of From Chaos to Calm: Finding Jesus in Your Storm.

This was originally presented by Pastor Bret when he participated in the Coles County Power of Prayer gathering on September 25th. When asked what he wanted to pray about, he asked, "Can I pray for pastors?" They thought that would be great. This is what Bret shared that night.

Suggested Prayer Guides:

Practical Prayers for Your Pastor by Dan Reiland

Protecting Pastors through Strategic Prayer by Adena Hodges

Prayer and Care for Pastors and Their Families by Kim Butts

A Gift for Your Pastor

Giving Ourselves to Prayer: An Acts 6:4 Primer for Ministry
compiled by Dr. Dan Crawford

Pastors Resource Project – A donation of \$40 provides \$68 in free prayer resources to a pastor.