

How the Pandemic Is Affecting Your Pastor

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What they would never tell you.

We pastors and ministry leaders are an interesting lot. Of course, we are *not* more important than anyone else and neither is our occupation. We are, however, called to care for the hearts and souls of people. Yesterday, I spent time on the phone with a man who had lost his wife the night before. We both cried.

You see, pastors are the *first responders* to the spiritual struggles and emotional tragedies of humanity. The millions on this planet who are ...

Lost.

Broken.

Distraught.

Afraid.

Hopeless.

Desperate and struggling.

I cannot presume to speak for all pastors in all churches, but I have been in ministry for nearly 40 years, so I *can* speak from decades of experience.

And here's a reality: Your pastor is a good man or woman who wrestles with darkness on a regular basis—*for you*.

Since the pandemic of COVID-19 began, your pastor has probably never worked so hard, prayed so long, or felt your pain more than now. He or she is doing their absolute best to provide you a plethora of opportunities to better connect you with God and others. Pastors know that if a person gets isolated, they get vulnerable to all sorts of evil. We don't want you just to survive this challenging time; we want you to grow and thrive spiritually in the midst of it all.

We understand your fears, worries, and frustrations because we feel them too. We know the stress of unexpected and unwanted change. We feel the weight of being forced to make difficult decisions. We

too toss and turn at night and wonder, *How long? How much? How bad will it get before it gets better?*

And for your pastor, it's not just about *them*; it's about *you* as well. Any pastor worth his salt is either up late or up very early (or both) crying out to God on your behalf. They hear the struggle in your voice when they call. They see the fearful posts you make on social media. They know the potential for serious relational strain in your marriage and family when everybody is indefinitely confined and concerned about almost everything.

We get it.

We're there too.

But our "burden" includes you and yours—*not* just our own immediate family.

We are deeply concerned about you and your emotional, relational, and spiritual health.

You may not understand the shepherd's heart we have for you, but it's why we do what we do. Trust me, our labor of love isn't about the money or the glory (99.99% of us will never be rich or famous).

But we are called and commissioned by Jesus to watch over you.

And we are shepherds of God's flock who would face a bear at the risk of our own life for you.

Forgive me if all of this sounds somewhat self-promoting. Like I said at the beginning of this post, we aren't more important than you or anyone else.

However, as a pastor who often mentors and cares for other leaders, I felt compelled to remind you to please **pray for your leaders** who are watching over and aching for you.

Pastors aren't superhuman, and right now some of them can barely breathe because of the load they are carrying.

I know, we should "cast our all our cares on the Lord." So please don't quote any Scriptures to me in an attempt to correct my perspective.

But let me remind you that even Jesus wrestled with weariness.

When Jesus was sleeping on a cushion in the stern of a boat during a storm, it wasn't because He didn't care; it was because He was exhausted.

And for the record, pastors aren't nearly as strong or as good as Jesus.

So please pray for your pastor, then pray some more.

We need it.

"Keep owning the fact that you aren't perfect and nearly as strong as you think. Agree with God about your sin, and don't be embarrassed to ask others to pray for you when you fail. We all need help. Even spiritual giants like Elijah were still just human, but

*watch what God can do when we are in relationship with him!” —
James 5:16–18 (Bubna Paraphrase)*