

A Devotional Guide – Praying for Shepherds
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Four Indispensable Prayer Investments in Praying for Shepherds
1 Timothy 3:1—7

1. Pray with Thanksgiving for God’s Call Upon His Life.

On 52 occasions God’s Word builds upon the concept in which believers are instructed to “encourage one another,” or some similar promotion of unity and harmony within the church. A Shepherd is simply a man who has been called by God to the work of an overseer. As seen in this Scripture, God’s Word declares that it is a “fine work he desires to do.” Any prayer that begins with thanksgiving is off to a great start. If you would pray for the shepherds of our churches...simply start your prayer with thankfulness for these men who have God’s calling upon them.

2. Pray for the Shepherd’s Christian Character.

Of significant interest in the qualifications listed, only one has anything to do with ability or giftedness (“able to teach”). The emphasis is clearly on Christian character. Pray for the man who shepherds the flock...that he grows in all of these areas and that God himself will protect the shepherd from the pull of the world, the weaknesses of the flesh, and the flaming arrows of the adversary. If God puts this manner of emphasis on Christian character for the shepherd, let us not forget to value these traits as highly as He does.

3. Pray for the Teaching Ministry of the Shepherd.

Turner Research, LLC, conducted an opinion poll in Rapides Parish, Louisiana, in June 2013. In asking about the type of minister preferred, they found the following results: 1. “Teacher type” was preferred by 22 percent. 2. “Bold, tell it like it is type” was preferred by 13 percent. 3. The “Caring type” was preferred by 12 percent. 4. “One well educated” was preferred at the rate of 14 percent. And so on. God’s Word indicates that the ability to teach is the critical feature. Pray that the shepherd will have proper time to study, divine help from God’s Spirit, and a heart to communicate the truth of Scripture.

4. Pray for the Godly Reputation of the Shepherd.

The shepherd is plainly...to be trustworthy with his Christian character in the full view of those outside the church. Pray that he may be found faithful in every situation that he encounters. Pray that even those that disagree with the biblical world view may regard the shepherd of the church with respect for his consistency and conviction.

Making it Personal

As a Director of Missions, it is my privilege to visit the worship services of the 95 churches of three associations. Each week I observe pastors and church congregations. For those men who serve as shepherds, I am simply amazed at their giftedness, their

devotion to God, and their selfless service. In most congregations, equally observable are the church members who are devoted to God and who demonstrate a desire to conduct themselves according to Scripture. But, I think there is a dynamic tension that exists in church life regarding the attitudes of the people toward the shepherd. On the one hand, the people wish to honor the biblical role of the shepherd. On the other hand, there is the reality that he is not perfect. By following this devotional outline, perhaps we may keep our focus on praying for the things that are biblically emphasized and reducing the temptation to get distracted with critiquing those other less important issues. Pray for shepherds...and pray aptly...as God's Word has shown us.

It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do.² An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,³ not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money.⁴ He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity⁵ (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?),⁶ and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil.⁷ And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil (1 Timothy 3:1-7 NASB).