

# Prayer for Leaders - Obstacles and Enhancers to Finishing Well

Based on the work of Dr. Bobby Clinton, Fuller Theological Seminary

Dr. Bobby Clinton spent the majority of his life as a researcher and professor studying and teaching about leadership, and specifically about how to help leaders finish their lives and ministry well, especially given the results of his research which indicated that fewer than 1 out of 3 leaders finished well - meaning they avoided major moral failure, they did not plateau, etc. Below are crafted prayers for leaders based on Clinton's work on how to pray for leaders in movements, that they might avoid the common pitfalls of leadership and also take advantage of the things that will help ensure that they will finish their race well. You can pray these prayers, or just use them to help you understand how to pray for leaders more effectively.

## **Six Obstacles to Finishing Well**

### (1) Improper use of finances

Lord God, you know that almost all leaders will face great needs at many points during their lives, personal needs for themselves or their families, or needs for their ministry. Father, we ask for tremendous grace in the face of tremendous need, grace to remain above reproach, to choose wisely in handling money time and time and time again. Father, we ask that your presence would be felt by these leaders as they consider financial decisions large and small, and that they would walk at all times in the fear of the Lord as they consider how to use money for personal or ministry purposes. Father, we ask for clarity of thinking and for strong and godly community for these leaders, Lord - communities of trust and vulnerability, communities of honor that can call leaders to a higher standard and question financial decisions without fear. We ask for these leaders to have the grace to respond with humility and openness when questioned about finances, and to bring others into their decisions in order to maintain the trust of those they lead.

### (2) Abuse of Power and Position

Father, we know that most leaders have suffered under unhealthy or domineering leaders in their lives; leaders that cared more about gathering more followers or exercising command and control than about loving and leading their people well - be it within the church or in other communities or organizations. Father, for the leaders that we lift up to you today, we ask for grace to see unhealthy, ungodly leadership for what it is. Help to come out and be different from the broken models that they have experienced. Help them to find a better way as they submit to your leadership, and help them to reflect your kind of humble, self-sacrificing love in their own leadership of others. Teach them what it means to exercise power-giving leadership as opposed to a leadership that would keep all the power for themselves. Train them in humility, and gather

around them people who would have access to their thoughts and decisions, to the deep places of their hearts, and who have the trust to lovingly question the motives and decisions of leaders. Help these leaders to receive such questioning as an act of courageous love, and help them to respond accordingly.

### (3) Pride

Gentle Father, we know that pride is spiritual cancer, as C.S. Lewis said. It starts small and unnoticed, then grows rapidly until it has invaded every part of the body; and left untreated it invariably brings death. Father, help these leaders to recognize pride as just such a danger to their lives, their families, their ministries, and to the lives of those who they serve as leaders. Father, bring about a clear understanding in their hearts about the upside-down nature of your kingdom, and especially of leadership your kingdom. Help them to see clearly and powerfully that they desperately need to walk in humility at all times, that this is the only hope they have of surviving the temptations of leadership. Father, break their pride in your mercy. Expose every place in their hearts that is arrogant, boastful, or proud. Reveal to them the cancer that is resident in their own hearts, and show them the damage it can do if left unchecked. Lord, please raise up people around these leaders to love them, mentors to train them in the ways of humility and service, companions to question and provoke serious reflection in their own hearts. Most of all, Lord, please draw them to you, and help to learn from your humble, cross-shaped love that sacrificed everything for those under its care.

### (4) Sexual Immorality & Inappropriate Relationships

Father, there are so many things arrayed against leaders who seek to finish well, and sexual temptation is among the most dangerous. In both permissive and conservative cultures, sexual temptation remains a constant for many leaders, and no other of the six obstacles has the same power to destroy lives, families, and ministries. Lord, we know that this temptation only grows stronger when ignored, left in the dark and unseen by others we can trust; so Father once again we ask for grace for these leaders to develop a community of trusted companions with whom they can be honest, seek help and prayer, and confess their failures without rejection. Lord, just as ask for communities of acceptance, love, and forgiveness, we also ask for greater recognition of the deep need in the lives of many leaders for inner healing from past trauma and wounds that can exacerbate sexual temptation. Lord, help these leaders see how greatly their past affects their present and their future, and help them to be honest about their need for healing. Help them to see out the help they need and press into the process of your healing in their lives.

### (5) Plateauing

Father, we ask for grace in the lives of these leaders to overcome passivity as well. We know that a lack of trusted input and mentorship in the lives of leaders, or a refusal to maintain the lifelong attitude of being a teachable learner, can result in plateaued effectiveness and influence in the life of a leader. Lord, we ask that you would empower these leaders to raise up around them trusted

communities of friends and mentors who could speak truth into their lives. We ask also that you would help them to remain humble and teachable; bring about circumstances in their lives where they will be forced to stretch beyond what they know to learn and accomplish new things. Stir them to remain active in developing their minds and growing their hearts in attachment to You.

#### (6) Marriage & Family Problems

Lord God, you know that the families of leaders often suffer attack, just as much or sometimes more than the leaders themselves. Father, we ask for grace and wisdom in the lives of these leaders to recognize the dire need to cultivate their marriages, to continue to be students of their spouses, learning how best to love and serve them. Grow these leaders to be godly parents, patiently modeling godly choices and wisely giving guidance to their children. Protect the bonds between husbands and wives, and between parents and children! Help these leaders not to make an idol out of ministry, not to think that the work you have entrusted to them is their work to do - rather, help them to see that they are called to be guided by you, and partner with you, in the advance of whatever work you have invited them into. Help them not to think of themselves more highly than they ought to, but to remain humble, patient, and loving in their family relationships. Lord, grant them grace to ask for help when they need it, and to be humble enough to receive help offered, even if from unexpected sources.

#### ***Questions to ask the Lord about the six obstacles to finishing well:***

Lord, how can we help create better safeguards to prevent undue temptation to misuse finances in the lives of the leaders we serve and with whom we partner?

Father, what cultural or contextual means already exist that help curb temptation to misuse of finances? How can we better leverage those means to help these leaders?

Father, where are the traps in this culture and context that tempt leaders to abuse the power or position? What are the cultural lies that they are tempted to believe? And how can we counteract those lies with scriptural truth that will overcome the cultural pressures they face?

Father, where is there pride in my own heart?

Where are leaders in our context most likely to be tempted to pride or arrogance?

Lord, what are the cultural issues that affect temptation to pride in our context, especially regarding leadership?

Father, who are the people that you are raising up around these leaders to act as a safeguard around their lives? How can we empower them, or encourage these leaders to empower them so that they will know that they can lovingly question motives and decisions without fear of reprisal or broken relationship?

Father, what obstacles need to be overcome in the lives of these leaders so that they can truly allow others into their hearts in genuine openness and vulnerability? How would that look in this culture and context?

In what ways does our cultural context hide sexual sin or minimize temptation? How can we help leaders to grow in awareness of the dangers presented by this temptation?

Father, in what ways are these leaders at greater risk to sexual sin because of unhealed trauma or wounds in their past? How would you have us serve them in helping them toward healing of those wounds so that they can experience victory in their present and future?

## **Five Enhancers to Finishing Well**

### **(1) Lifetime Perspective**

Father, we are mortal and weak; we tend to see only what is right in front of us. Father, please grant these leaders for which we are praying wisdom and foresight; help them to see clearly that whatever they are facing now is not the whole picture or extent of their lives. Help them to see that you have called them to a lifetime of intimacy with You, a lifetime of kingdom fruitfulness. Father, please remind them that there is much more ahead of them than whatever is pressing on them right now, and help them to pray and plan into the coming seasons of life - for their own development, for their family's health, and for the progress of their ministry.

### **(2) Personal Renewal**

Lord, we know that leaders who remain faithful to the end have regular experiences of renewal in their relationships with You: times of hearing You more clearly, of receiving fresh vision or a fresh revelation of Your love for them, or a specific affirmation regarding something with which they are struggling. Lord, we are asking for an abundant outpouring in the lives of these leaders, that they would live their lives in sensitivity to Your Spirit, that they would make regular time to be still and wait on Your voice, and that they would seek out a fresh touch from You when they are in need. Father, help them make wise decisions about priorities so that they have time and space to receive what they need from You on a regular basis.

### (3) Disciplines

Father, we know that effective leaders need to exercise disciplines of many kinds, but this is especially true of spiritual disciplines. Toward that end, Lord, we ask for a fresh recognition in the lives of these leaders that they need to regularly put themselves in the way of Your grace. Lord, teach them from Your Word and through the power of Your Spirit about the power and grace accessible to them through prayer, fasting, solitude, silence, and the other disciplines. Father, help them to see the many examples in Scripture, to follow those examples in their own lives, and to encourage and teach others to do the same. Lord, if there are disciplines in which they are weak, or which they have set aside, please call them back to a deeper encounter with You through those disciplines - open their eyes and their hearts to receive from You in new ways.

### (4) Learning Posture

Father, we know that the attitude of a learner, the attitude of a teachable person, is built on an earlier foundation of humility. As this enhancer is linked to having a lifetime perspective, and not falling into the trap of pride, we especially ask for increased humility and teachableness in the lives of these leaders. Lord, help them to discern which voices to listen to and which to ignore, but help them to identify those from whom they can learn. Help them to remember that You are not finished with them yet, they You are ever teaching us new things, and always at work forming our character. Help them to grow in openness to Your voice, and in softheartedness towards those who might have something that they need to hear or to learn. Alongside this discipline of maintaining a learning posture, we ask that You would continue to grow them in godly discernment as well.

### (5) Mentoring

Lord, we know that we can only fully be ourselves in relationship with You and with other people; none of us are called to live in isolation. We need people to encourage us, to challenge us, to rebuke and correct us, to pray for us, to teach us, to support and make ways for us. We need friends, spiritual fathers and mothers, co-laborers, and guides along the way of our life's journey. Lord God, please remind these leaders that they are who they are through the power of the relationships you have given them throughout their lives; remind them also that the relationships they cultivate for the rest of their lives will equally impact their lives, their joy, their fruitfulness, and their ability to finish well. Father, help these leaders to identify who in their lives can serve in different mentoring roles for different needs at different times; but help them to recognize that they will always need mentoring and coaching, regardless of their life stage. Raise up mentors to help them, people to walk alongside them, to encourage and support them, to call them forward into the next stage of life and ministry.

### ***Questions to ask the Lord about the five enhancers to finishing well:***

Lord, how are we modeling keeping a lifetime perspective in our relationships with our leaders? How well do we need to pray and think into the next season of life? How can we help our leaders to consider the next season of their life, or even the next thing beyond the current pressing crisis or need that they may be facing?

Father, are there ways that their situation is so stressful for trying that they are unable to think beyond the now; and if so, is there something You would have us do to help alleviate some of that pressure?

Lord, how can I encourage and seek renewal in my own life and in the lives of the leaders in which I am investing? To what areas do You most want to speak life - to me? To them?

Father, what in our lives is hindering renewal and refreshing from You?

Father, how does the local culture affect our view, or these leaders' view, of disciplines in general and spiritual disciplines in particular?

How can we engage more effectively in the spiritual disciplines, and encourage the same in the lives of these leaders? Where are we weakest in terms of the disciplines? Where do we need teaching or modeling or practice?

Father, how well are we modeling a learning posture for the leaders with whom we interact? Do we come across as having all the answers, or having a plan for every eventuality? Or do we model a daily and desperate dependence on Your Spirit for guidance in all things?

Father, how are we learning in this season of life? How can we encourage these leaders to not just learn, but to value learning and to seek it out on their own?

Lord, what mentors might be able to speak into our lives and the lives of these leaders? What relational resources have You provided that we are simply unaware of?

Lord, in what other ways to You want to bolster and strengthen the lives, families, and leadership of these leaders? How do You want to work through us to do that? What other resources are available to us to achieve these ends?

Lord, how can we best teach these lessons about obstacles and enhancers to these leaders in such a way that they will be able to absorb the lessons, take them to heart, apply them in their own context, and pass them on to other leaders?