



It is always good practice to express appreciation for your pastor.

- Pastors have one of the most difficult and demanding assignments that sadly can be taken for granted
- LIFT is an 'Upstream Strategy' to address the downstream problems of pastoral burnout, discouragement, and disillusionment
- As a congregation, the Lord will be inviting you to join Him in loving and supporting your pastor

Colossians 3:16 Moment:

"Let the Word of Christ dwell deeply in you . . ." (Col. 3:16).

Pastor/Teacher: As I reflect in this message on Paul as a "Great Pastor, I'm not wanting to take that title for myself, but rather to vulnerably share with you the journey I'm on to be the pastor that God wants me to be. I have not arrived, but as I reflect on Paul's heart for the church at Corinth, this is my hope and prayer for me in my ministry to you at this church."



Confessions of a Great Pastor

2 Corinthians 3:1–18

Introduction:

In reading though the book of 2 Corinthians, one's attention is drawn to the authentic transparency of the apostle Paul as a shepherd-leader. If there was ever a great pastor and effective spiritual leader, the apostle Paul would be placed in that classification. His life was transformed from being 'Saul, the Persecutor' to 'Paul, the Gospel Preacher'. God used Paul to spread the Gospel throughout the then known world – just consider the names of the books he penned in the New Testament—Romans, Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Philemon, Philippians, and 1 and 2 Thessalonians. He wrote one-third of the New Testament, yet consider the vulnerable confessional that Paul makes in this text about 'WHO he really desires to become.'

To grow as a spiritual leader, one must make vulnerable confessions before the Lord and before the people whom he leads. The healthy sign of a maturing leader is the desire to grow and develop in a spiritual journey with the people. As one reads devotionally 2 Corinthians chapter 3, you can see through the mind and heart of a great pastor—confessing "This is WHO I really want to be." This could be the vulnerable confession of any pastor: "I have not arrived, but as I reflect on Paul's heart for the church at Corinth, this is my hope and prayer for me in my ministry to you at this church."

Confessions for a pastor can cause uneasiness, but consider the confessions that Paul made to the church of Corinth. As a church member, allow these confessions to move your heart with compassion to LIFT your pastor by praying, caring, and sharing with him in his journey of supporting you as shepherd. (As a pastor, consider if any of the following confessions resonate with you).

I. Confession #1—“I genuinely care for you.”

“Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some, letters of recommendation to you or from you? You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, recognized and read by everyone. It is clear that you are Christ’s letter, produced by us, not written with ink but with the Spirit of the living God — not on stone tablets but on tablets that are hearts of flesh” (2 Corinthians 3: 1-3).

- Paul was not impressed with resume writing or other’s recommendation of his ministry.
- Paul’s letter of recommendation is his relationship with the people based on the Gospel.
- The only recommendation Paul desires is lives that have been transformed.

Paul transparently confesses in verse two: “You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, recognized, and read by everyone.” Note his care and connection with the people. ‘You are written on our hearts— recognized and read by everyone.’ This same heart of care is reflected in his words in 1 Thessalonians 2:8, “So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us.”

If this was the confession of the great pastor, the apostle Paul, how much more is this the desire of your pastor to BE KNOWN as one who cares for you.

Application: Take time in a letter, email or social media to express your gratitude for the ‘caring heart of your pastor’ – Your words of affirmation and appreciation will encourage your pastoral staff.

Confessions of a Great Pastor #1: *Paul wanted to continue becoming a pastor who genuinely cared.*



P-3 Discerning the relational needs of others with a heart to give of His love

Experience Scripture

“...so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another” (1 Corinthians 12:5).

We are each called to be people who care. A caring community is to be one of our distinctives as followers of Jesus.

Pause quietly and consider WHO is it that needs to benefit from His care through you? Ask Him. “Lord, who would you have me better care for?” Now listen. Thank Him that you hear His voice, and purpose to soon express this care.

II. Confession #2—“My adequacy is from God.”

“We have this kind of confidence toward God through Christ. It is not that we are competent in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our competence is from God. He has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit produces life” (2 Corinthians 3:4-6).

Competent —**sufficient**— means adequate, fit, able, and effective. It is God who enables the pastor to do what only He can do through his life. “God makes one sufficient for the task” (2 Timothy 1: 7).

Notice that for the apostle Paul, his competence does not come from:

- His theological training—he was trained at the feet of Gamaliel; he was three years alone with Christ searching the Scriptures following his conversion (Galatians 1); he wrote one-third of the New Testament Bible.
- His years of ministry experience—he is the apostle Paul, evangelist, church planter, pastor, and spiritual leader of the New Testament church
- The people he knows— ministry associations (i.e., Simon Peter, Mary [the mother of Jesus], the first apostles, etc.)

His competency for Gospel ministry comes from God. “...you, written by Christ himself for God, are our letter of recommendation. We wouldn’t think of writing this kind of letter about ourselves. Only God can write such a letter.” His confidence is toward God in Christ. “God has made us competent to be ministers of the new covenant” (2 Corinthians 3: 5).

- Competence comes from God’s calling.
 - In salvation
 - In service to ministry
 - In the Holy Spirit’s presence and power

Realize, God saves us by His amazing grace at desperation, and He keeps us at desperation to be wholly dependent on Him in ministry. Colossians 2: 6–7 is a strong exhortation for a spiritual leader to heed: “Therefore, as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, overflowing with gratitude.”

Consider, SINCE the great pastor/leader Paul confessed his adequacy is in Christ only, how much more does your pastor sense this confession? Every pastor feels a sense of inadequacy with the great task of handling the Word of God and shepherding the local flock. Matthew 5: 3, 6 says, “The poor in spirit are blessed, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs. Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are blessed, for they will be filled.” Your pastor is poor in spirit; he is hungry for God to do a work in him and through him!

Kent Hughes in his book *Liberating the Ministry from the Success Syndrome* teaches a very important principle: “Learn to thank God for your inadequacy, for it leaves room for God’s adequacy.” There is an old saying that says, “Any Ole bush will do” which is a reference to the burning bush God spoke through to Moses—burning, yet not consumed. That bush is a picture of the inexhaustible power of God displayed through a life that is abandoned to the will of God.

Jesus said in John 15:5 “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.”

P-10 Humbly acknowledging to the Lord, ourselves, and others that it is Jesus in and through us who is loving others at their point of need

Challenge to the church:

Take time daily to pray for your pastor and family. Verbally and in writing, share how you see God bringing adequacy. Pray that God would keep your pastor close to Him and clean.



Download resources that will serve and bless your pastor here.

L-9 Yielding to the Spirit's fullness as life in the Spirit brings supernatural intimacy with the Lord, manifestation of divine gifts, and witness of the fruit of the Spirit

Engage Fellowship

"...apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

None of us in our own strength has any hope of living life abundant. Pray now with one or two others, making declaration of your helplessness. "Lord, my power and my strength are insufficient—I need you." Pray this humbly with others, believing together that Jesus is present . . . is available . . . is sufficient.

Confessions of a Great Pastor: Paul wanted to continue becoming a pastor who genuinely cared AND he knew that his adequacy came from God alone.

III. Confession #3—"I want to minister Life in the Spirit."

"Now if the ministry of death, chiseled in letters on stones, came with glory, so that the Israelites were not able to look directly at Moses' face because of the glory from his face — a fading glory—how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness overflows with even more glory. In fact, what had been glorious is not glorious now by comparison because of the glory that surpasses it. For if what was fading away was glorious, what endures will be even more glorious: (2 Corinthians 3:7–11).

Notice verse 8: "How shall the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more glorious?"

As a pastor, my ideas and plans birthed in the flesh remain flesh . . . but I want to come before you having heard from HIM (John 3:6), confident that as His Spirit leads, He will bless and receive glory. Jesus said in John 3:6, "Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh, and whatever is born of the Spirit is spirit."

Consider the background:

- The giving of the Old Testament Law on Mt. Sinai was glorious—a mountain filled with smoke, fire, and quaking.
- Moses' face shining with glory—connecting the Exodus 34:29 reference to when Moses received the law of God—"Now it was so, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the Testimony were in Moses' hand when he came down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him."

Paul argues that if the law given to Moses was that of fading glory, then the ministry of the New Testament Gospel is more glorious!

Encounter Jesus

If we want to minister life in His Spirit, we must spend more time with Him.

"... out of your innermost being shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:38).

Quietly meditate on the invitation of Jesus. Come to Him. Respond to His promise of the Spirit flowing through you. Welcome the Holy Spirit's prompting and empowerment. Thank the Lord Jesus for not leaving you as an orphan, but coming to you through His Spirit.

Application: Spiritual Leadership must be filled with opportunities to 'hear from heaven' weekly to impart spiritual life to the congregation.

Download resources at:

PREACH ENGAGE

Insight: As a church, give your pastor adequate seasons in sermon preparation for unhurried and uninterrupted prayer and study to 'hear from the Lord' each week.

- Acts 6: 4 records the habits of the early church leaders: "But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the preaching ministry."
- Treat your pastor's times of study and prayer as sacred by not interrupting him unless it is an unavoidable emergency (i.e. death in the church family), but avoid the 'tyranny of the urgent' like a counseling meeting that can be scheduled later in the week.
- Understand that the average preparation time for a thirty-minute sermon is eight to ten hours. Some pastors require more, others require less, yet the reality is all pastors need seasons of quiet study each week.
- If your pastor is available 'any-time,' he will not be effective in 'the time' he is called to speak God's Word to your heart.



W-4 Humbly and vulnerably sharing of the Spirit's transforming work through the Word

Confessions of a Great Pastor

#1—"I genuinely care for you."

#2—"My adequacy is alone from God."

#3—"I want to minister life in the Spirit."

IV. Confession #4—"I desire to preach with boldness for life-change."

"Therefore, having such a hope, we use great boldness. We are not like Moses, who used to put a veil over his face so that the Israelites could not stare at the end of what was fading away, but their minds were closed. For to this day, at the reading of the old covenant, the same veil remains; it is not lifted, because it is set aside only in Christ. Even to this day, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their hearts, but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is removed" (2 Corinthians 3:12–16, emphasis added).

Consider the background from Exodus 34:33–35 which gives the account of the covering of the veil: "And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face. But whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with Him, he would take the veil off until he came out; and he would come out and speak to the children of Israel whatever he had been commanded. And whenever the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone, then Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with Him" (emphasis added).

Note 2 Corinthians 3:12: "We use great boldness in speech . . . not like Moses who used to put a veil over his face . . . the veil is now set aside in Christ".

- Christ removes the veil from our face and we stand face to face with the glory of the Lord!

Since we have this hope in the gospel, we use great boldness of speech.

As a pastor, at times we may want to "soften" truth . . . but when I do, it's not HIS truth. Therefore, pray that He gives you boldness to share HIS truth, realizing that each of us needs a fresh 'turning to the Lord' (vs. 16).

Exodus 19: 3, 25 shows us the ministry model of Moses, which is to be replicated by pastors. "Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, 'Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel . . . so Moses went down to the people and told them.'"

Moses went up to the mountain to receive a word from the Lord; He came down the mountain to share the Word with God's people

Experience Scripture

"Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction" (2 Timothy 4:2).

Each of us is called to speak of the transforming power of God's Word. Consider a favorite Bible verse or a recent devotional time in the Word. How has this truth brought change to you? How has it brought Christ-likeness?

Colossians 3:16 Moment:

“Let the Word of Christ dwell deeply in you . . .” (Col. 3:16).

Challenge: Pray for boldness to be given to your pastor born of yielded preparation and courageous preaching each week.

- Pray for your pastor. “Pray also for me, that the message may be given to me when I open my mouth to make known with BOLDNESS the mystery of the gospel. For this I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I might be BOLD enough in Him to speak as I should” (Ephesians 6: 19–20, emphasis added).
- Encourage your pastor when he speaks the Word boldly
- Pray for your Pastor to have Colossians 3: 16 moments each week when ‘the Word of Christ will dwell richly’ in him . . . for what goes ‘in’ him will come ‘out’ of him.

Now pause to give God thanks for this truth becoming real in you, and then ask Him: “Who might benefit from me courageously speaking of His Word?” Someone at home? A friend or colleague? Someone at work or a neighbor? Purpose to seize your next opportunity to share.

Confessions of a Great Pastor :

#1—*“I genuinely Care for you.”*

#2—*“My adequacy is alone from God.”*

#3—*“I want to minister life in the Spirit.”*

#4—*“I desire to preach with boldness for life-change.”*

V. Confession #5—“I am on a Christ-likeness journey with you.”

“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. We all, with unveiled faces, are looking as in a mirror at the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:17-18, emphasis added).

“But we all . . . are being transformed . . . from glory to glory”(verse 18). Notice Paul says “we all” (i.e., meaning he puts himself into this text). Understand that even as your pastor, I’m with you in this transformation journey, so PBPWM—Please Be Patient With Me! God’s not finished yet!

- “Unveiled face” means that the pastor, with his people, is given the privilege of standing face to face with Christ and beholding His glory.
- ‘Looking as in a mirror’ indicates the ones who uncover their souls to the influence of Christ reflect His glory and are changed into His glory (i.e., reflecting is in the active voice, indicating there is to be an internal reflecting on the glory of the Lord).
- ‘The mirror’ is the gospel, which is called the gospel of the glory of Christ (cf., 2 Corinthians 4:4).
- ‘Changed’ could be defined as transformed and is in the present tense, expressing the change as a process. We ‘are being changed.’

The idea, then, is that those who are much in Christ’s presence become mirrors of Him, reflecting more and more permanently His image until they themselves perfectly resemble Him. In every reflector, there must be an exposure of itself to the sun, so that the light may fall full upon it. So, if we would reflect the glories of God, we must make a full presentation of ourselves to God.

Conclusion:

As we reflect on 2 Corinthians chapter 3, we discover the transparent confessions of a great pastor, the apostle Paul. If these confessions were true of such a great leader as Paul, how true are they to be of your pastor? They are true of my life.

- *“I genuinely Care for you” (vs. 1–3).*



L-8 Disciplined, bold, and believing prayer

Understand: If your pastor as the spiritual leader is not being spiritually transformed, the church will not experience spiritual transformation.

A spiritual leader can only lead a church as far as he himself has gone spiritually in his walk with the Lord.

Therefore, embrace your pastor as a fellow pilgrim on this journey of growing in Christ-likeness. For, the journey will not end until we see our Lord face to face (1 John 3:2).

- "I desire my adequacy to be alone from God" (vs. 4–6).
- "I want to minister Life in the Spirit" (vs. 7–11).
- "I desire to preach with boldness for life-change" (vs. 12–16).
- "I am on a Christ-Likeness journey with you" (vs. 17–18).

Engage Fellowship:

"This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him" (1 John 5: 14-15).

Gather in groups of three or four and pray boldly for your pastor and other shepherds who serve you. Pray in faith:

- For their walk with the Lord
- For their families
- For their courage to share the Word
- For their yieldedness to the Spirit

LIFT your pastor(s) by:

- Prayer— form a prayer covering for your pastor by arranging 31 individuals of the congregation to take one day a month to fast and pray for your pastor and his family.
- Care—review the *50 Ways to Bless Your Pastor* brochure and express care to him and his family.
- Share—a note of appreciation and affirmation with your pastor, or a gift to encourage him. Share with him a 'gifted time away' for an upcoming vacation.

How important is faithfulness in prayer for your pastor? Dr. Wilbur Chapman often told of his experience when, as a young man, he went to become pastor of a church in Philadelphia. After his first sermon, an old gentleman said to him, "You're pretty young to be pastor of this church. But you preach the gospel, and I'm going to help you all I can." Dr. Chapman thought, "Here's a crank." But the man continued: "I'm going to pray for you that you may have the Holy Spirit's power upon you. Two others have covenanted to join with me in prayer for you." Dr. Chapman said, "I didn't feel so bad when I learned he was going to pray for me. The 3 became 10, the 10 became 20, and 20 became 50, the 50 became 200 who met before every service to pray that the Holy Spirit might come upon me. I always went into my pulpit feeling that I would have the anointing in answer to the prayers of those who had faithfully prayed for me. It was a joy to preach! The result was that we received 1,100 into our church by conversion in three years, 600 of whom were men. It was the fruit of the Holy spirit in answer to prayer!"