

If you're someone who regularly stands at the altar or pulpit to serve God's people, know that you've been placed in a position of great honor, but also one that requires deep caution. This is not just a task; it's a sacred responsibility entrusted to you by God Himself. As the Apostle James warns, "Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness" (James 3:1, ESV). Why is this? It is a position of great honor because the altar represents the meeting point between God and His people. God's glory is revealed through your ministry, and you are His vessel. But there is also grave danger in mishandling this responsibility, as the glory of God is at stake. The consequences of careless ministry can lead to a breakdown in the spiritual life of the congregation and a failure to see God's presence manifest in the service.

At times, a service may fail to reach the spiritual heights intended—not because the congregation isn't paying attention, but because the ministers have not adequately prepared, both spiritually and physically. The Bible teaches us that "study to show thyself approved" (2 Timothy 2:15), and this is not just about academic study, but spiritual preparation. If a preacher or minister fails to prepare spiritually and prayerfully, they may find themselves relying on their own strength rather than the power of the Holy Spirit. This can lead to an impotent and fruitless service, even if it appears outwardly energetic or engaging.

For instance, if you're a preacher or pastor, and you know you're scheduled to teach at a seminar or lead a Sunday service, but on Sunday morning, you're still scrambling to figure out what to teach, this is a recipe for spiritual failure. You may feel the pressure to deliver a word but will likely fail to minister the way God desires. God's Word is living and active (Hebrews 4:12), and should be handled with reverence and preparation.

1. Ask God to give you the message to teach: (15 minutes)

Sometimes you may already have a message in mind, which is good, but God's will is not always the same as our plans. The apostle Paul wrote, "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2, ESV). True preaching comes from the Holy Spirit revealing what God wants to say in that moment. Pray for fresh revelation, and trust that the Holy Spirit will speak directly to the hearts of your listeners. The Holy Spirit is the One who convicts, instructs, and empowers (John 16:8), and He may either bring new insight or strengthen your prepared message. As Jesus says, "When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth" (John 16:13, ESV).

2. Ask the Lord to help you preach the full truth of His Word with boldness: (15 minutes)

It's easy to succumb to the fear of man, but we must remember that the Word of God is not ours to alter. It is a sharp sword (Hebrews 4:12), able to pierce hearts and divide between soul and spirit. Paul reminds Timothy, "Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching" (2 Timothy 4:2, ESV). True ministers of the gospel must declare the full counsel of God, even when it is uncomfortable or unpopular. Jesus Himself modeled this, declaring, "I have given them Your word, and the world has hated them" (John 17:14, ESV). Preaching the full truth with courage is an act of obedience to Christ, not to the whims of people. We are to please God, not men (Galatians 1:10).

3. Ask the Lord to give you examples to use in your message: (15 minutes)

Jesus often used parables and stories to explain deep truths, and as ministers, we should pray for the wisdom to do the same. Illustrations make the Word accessible and help the congregation connect with divine truths. "He did not speak to them without a parable" (Mark 4:34, ESV). The Holy Spirit can guide you to use the right examples or analogies that will make God's Word come alive to your audience. Ask for creative wisdom in communicating the truths of Scripture in ways that are relevant and understandable.

4. Ask the Lord to make your words powerful when you minister: (15 minutes)

Jesus spoke with authority. The Bible tells us that “they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one who had authority” (Mark 1:22, ESV). Words that are filled with the power of the Holy Spirit will bring conviction, healing, and transformation. The Apostle Paul emphasized that his preaching was not “with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and power” (1 Corinthians 2:4, NIV). The Holy Spirit must empower your words, so that they are not merely human wisdom, but life-giving truth. The power of God’s Word can break chains, heal wounds, and convict hearts.

5. Ask that God’s name be glorified: (15 minutes)

In all things, God must receive the glory. Jesus Himself lived to glorify the Father. As He said, “I glorified You on earth, having accomplished the work that You gave Me to do” (John 17:4, ESV). Our ministries should always seek to magnify Christ, not ourselves. In preaching, it is tempting to seek approval, attention, or accolades. However, we must echo the words of John the Baptist, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30, ESV). Your goal is not personal fame but the glory of God. This is why, when ministering, you should pray for humility and a pure heart,

focused solely on lifting up Jesus.

6. Ask God to give you a discerning spirit (to open your spiritual eyes):  
(15 minutes)

Ministers need the ability to discern what the Holy Spirit is doing in any given moment. This gift of discernment allows us to perceive spiritual conditions and to respond appropriately. As Paul wrote, “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God... because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14, NKJV). The Holy Spirit will give you insights into the spiritual state of your congregation. This may involve understanding someone’s need for healing, conviction of sin, or the need for encouragement. Pray for the eyes of your heart to be opened (Ephesians 1:18), so that you can minister effectively in the power of the Spirit.

7. Ask the Lord to protect you from distractions: (15 minutes)

Distractions, both physical and spiritual, can derail your ministry. The enemy loves to sow confusion and disinterest, especially when the Word of God is being preached. In the parable of the sower, Jesus spoke of how the enemy comes to snatch away the seed of the Word before it can take root (Matthew 13:19). Pray for a focused mind and a heart undistracted

by external noise or inner turmoil. The Apostle Paul exhorts us to “fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2, NIV). Let nothing steal your attention from the work of the Holy Spirit in that moment.

8. Ask that God’s power be present to heal and bless the people: (15 minutes)

God’s presence and power are essential for any ministry to bear fruit. Pray that God’s power would be manifest in your ministry. Jesus performed miracles as signs of God’s kingdom breaking into the world (Luke 5:17). When the early church preached the Word, signs and wonders followed (Acts 4:30). This is not just for the apostles—the Holy Spirit works through us to accomplish God’s purposes. We must pray that God’s healing, deliverance, and blessings would flow through our service, so that people’s lives are truly changed.

9. Ask the Lord to protect you from the fiery darts of the enemy: (15 minutes)

The enemy often attacks ministers, both spiritually and physically. Paul talks about the “fiery darts of the wicked one” (Ephesians 6:16), which represent attacks on the mind, emotions, and physical health. Pray for

divine protection as you minister. The enemy wants to distract, discourage, and destroy, but we are victorious through Christ. God promises to protect His servants (Psalm 91:4), and no weapon formed against you shall prosper (Isaiah 54:17).

### Final Thoughts

These prayers and preparations are not just for preachers but for anyone who serves God—whether as a choir member, children’s teacher, youth leader, evangelist, or missionary. Ministry is a sacred work, and preparation is key to ensuring that it bears lasting fruit. Long-term, prayerful preparation helps you position yourself for the Holy Spirit to work powerfully through you.

God bless you

## GUIDELINES FOR MINISTERS AND PULPIT SERVANTS

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