

SESSION 2

Start with Prayer



QUESTION 1:

Whom do you know that's really dedicated to something?

THE POINT

God calls us to pray for others' salvation.

THE PASSAGE

1 Timothy 2:1-8

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

My prayer life has ebbed and flowed since becoming a believer. When I first received Christ, I had plenty of time to pray. Then life got busier with all the responsibilities that come with marriage, children, work, and ministry. Though I still prayed daily, it required focused effort. I remember feeling as though I had to fight through multiple distractions to spend time with God. My struggle was not due to a lack of desire, but a full schedule made me realize I needed to be more intentional in my prayer time.

I'm not alone. Many people struggle with prayer. In addition to the challenge of finding time for focused prayer, many struggle with *what* to pray. Praying for our own personal needs may be easy, but what do we pray beyond that? We can certainly pray for others, and when we see obvious, physical needs, we know what to pray. But we should pray for others in another way that's not as obvious as physical needs.

We should pray for the spiritual needs of others, and we can begin by praying for their salvation.

1 Timothy 2:1-2

1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;

2 For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

KEY WORDS: **Godliness** (v. 2)—Appropriate reverence for God that is demonstrated in holy living. This lifestyle provides a witness for Christ, even in hostile settings.

In these verses, Paul talks about the importance of prayer. Paul began with “first of all,” underscoring for Timothy that the first order of business in the church is to pray. Prayer should not be treated as just something we use to kick off our Bible study group or “filler” between songs during the worship service. As Paul told the Colossians: “Continue in prayer” (Col. 4:2). *Continue* is a strong word, calling us to be steadfastly devoted to prayer. Paul underscored this diligence when he told Timothy to lead the church to make prayer the first priority.

Prayer is how we communicate with God, but we often treat it like a monologue, focusing on our own needs and concerns. The ultimate goal of prayer, however, is to connect with God, to seek Him and His wisdom. When we do that, He is glorified as our prayers align with His will.

Paul identified several types of prayers. “Supplications” are requests for needs. In general, our “prayers” are requests or thoughts expressed to God. “Intercessions” are prayers we present to God on behalf of others. It is our privilege to intercede for and pray on behalf of others. And “giving of thanks” remind us to be grateful for who God is and what He has done and can do. Paul was not giving us an exhaustive list of ways to pray, but his list

emphasizes the comprehensive nature of our prayers. The call to pray is a serious one that incorporates all aspects of prayer.

It's not beneficial for our prayer life to focus on only one type of prayer. Effective prayers include petitions, intercession, and thanksgiving—all forms of prayer.

Jesus came to earth because God loved the world, and believers are expected to carry on His ministry to the world. One way we do that is through our prayers. Whether we agree with who people are or what they stand for, we're admonished to humble ourselves and intercede with the Father on their behalf. As we focus our prayers on the urgent spiritual need for others to draw near to God, we become filled with Christ's compassion for them.

We are to pray compassionate prayers for all—and that includes our leaders. As we pray for them, we should remember God has appointed them to the positions they hold. God is in control and has a plan for our leaders (Rom. 13:1-2). Paul's heart was in evangelism, sharing the message of Christ everywhere. Paul was writing during the reign of Nero, a harsh ruler who persecuted Christians when it suited him. Paul's reminder to pray for leaders would certainly include praying for their salvation, but those prayers also could include praying for their leadership and policies. What leaders do can greatly benefit the spread of the gospel. We should pray for leaders because what they do can help us "lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."

QUESTION 2:

What does a dynamic or effective prayer life look like?

1 Timothy 2:3-6

3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;

4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

6 Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

KEY WORDS: Mediator (v. 5)—A go-between that unifies two opposing sides. As fully God and fully human, Jesus was the perfect One to reconcile humanity to the Father.

I've had a few physical injuries that required care from a chiropractor or physical therapist. The goal of their therapy was to provide relief from pain and restore alignment of injured bones, muscles, tendons and ligaments. Those injuries often caused chronic discomfort until damaged parts of my body were brought back to healthy alignment.

We often need spiritual alignment as well. It's good to check ourselves to ensure that what we seek from God is in line with what He desires. Paul was clear on one thing God desires: He "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." Therefore, we should align our prayers with His desire and pray earnestly for the salvation of others.

Have you ever considered the impact you have on others as a believer? When we trust the hand of God to work through our prayers, we will pray with a sense of urgency. We have the privilege of praying for those whom God has placed within our sphere of influence, and such prayers are pleasing to God.

We can know that God's desire is for all to be saved because "there is one God." Since there is only one God, He has a singular purpose and desire. His desire does not just apply to the Jews but

to all people He created in His image. God also made that salvation available through “one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” Culture says there are many ways to God, but God provided only one way to a relationship with Him. Salvation is through Christ and Christ alone, “who gave himself a ransom for all.” Christ’s work of salvation is available to all.

We can be an agent of life transformation as we align ourselves with God’s desire by committing to pray for others to know and accept Jesus Christ as Savior. We should be diligent and take full advantage of the partnership we’ve been given. Through our prayers, we partner with God in advancing His kingdom.

QUESTION 3:

How does prayer align our desires with the desires of God?

1 Timothy 2:7-8

**7 Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity.
8 I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.**

Paul acknowledged that he was divinely appointed to preach the truths he mentioned in verses 5-6: the good news of the gospel. His mandate was to spread the message to the Gentiles of God’s love and redemption for all. Paul did not go exclusively to the Jews; rather, the Holy Spirit had led him to step into the culture of the Gentiles to share the same truth about Jesus that he shared with the Jews.

DIGGING DEEPER

HERALD, APOSTLE, TEACHER

Paul outlined the special nature of his own ministry in order to prove the validity of praying for all people. Paul had received these offices in order to proclaim the testimony about Jesus to the world. Paul described his appointment as involving the work of a “herald,” “an apostle,” and “a teacher.” As a “herald” Paul proclaimed the truth to needy hearers. The term denotes someone with important news to bring such as an announcer at an athletic event, religious festival, or even a political messenger in a royal court. As an apostle Paul operated with a divine commission (Gal 1:11-17). Paul preceded the introduction of his final office with an emotional outburst, insisting that he was

telling the truth. This emphatic parenthesis applies to the work of Paul as teacher of the Gentiles. That was his distinctive appointment beyond that which the twelve apostles received. As a herald and an apostle Paul was essentially a teacher of the Gentiles. As a “teacher” Paul operated in the realm of faith, the subjective response to the gospel, and truth, the objective appropriation of the gospel.

Paul’s impassioned remonstrance was intended to teach the troubled Ephesian church that the gospel reaches out for all people, even the Gentiles. It also certified Timothy as Paul’s representative and gave him standing before a difficult, cantankerous congregation.

Thomas D. Lea, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, vol. 34 of The New American Commentary, David S. Dockery, gen. ed. (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992) Wordsearch ed.

Verse 8 starts a new thought from Paul, but what follows was based on what he had written in the first seven verses. He began with “Therefore,” meaning “based on what I’ve just written, this is what you should do.” His instructions in verses 8-15 are for both men and women, but he began with the men in verse 8.

Paul had stressed the focus on our prayers, and now he told the men how they were to pray: “lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.” This is not an emphasis on the posture of prayer, but on our character. To have “holy hands” is to be morally pure. Paul had already told us to “lead a quiet and peaceable life

in all godliness and honesty” (1 Tim. 2:2), so to do so in moral purity without dissension among ourselves would certainly aid the reception of the gospel by others—the very thing we are to be praying for!

QUESTION 4:

Why is prayer an important step in sharing the gospel?

Because we will face all kinds of challenges, we need to be “prayed up.” Just as a soldier suits up for battle, or an athlete gears up for a game, believers need to be suited up with moral purity as we pray, girded firmly in praying to accomplish the work that God has entrusted to us. We cannot live, engage, or witness to the world in our own abilities. At the heart of prayer is a dependence on the Holy Spirit who empowers us to witness.

Four truths arise out of this passage—four ways we can pray:

1. We are to pray for all people: family, friends, enemies, and those who rule over us.
2. We are to pray for people to come to faith in Christ. Even as we pray for them in other ways (for example, when they are sick, needy, or suffering), our ultimate aim is to align with God’s desire that they experience His salvation.

Share Jesus Without Fear:

How to Pray for Nonbelievers

Start a prayer list of unbelievers for whom you can pray regularly.

Pray before you share the gospel.

Use prayer as a way to prepare you for sharing your faith. Pray for:

- Opportunities.
- Love.
- Others to see Christ in you.
- Boldness.
- Power.

3. We are to pray with confidence for their salvation because Christ paid the ransom for them through His death.
4. We are to pray for ourselves and others who share the gospel—all who, like Paul, are called to be “heralds” of the truth of Christ.

QUESTION 5:

How can our group pray together for the salvation of others?

ENGAGE

Praying for the salvation of others is a critical part of our mission as followers of Jesus.

Record the names of three people you know who are not Christians—yet. Commit to pray for these individuals each day this week:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

LIVE IT OUT

How will you put into practice praying for the salvation of others?

- ▶ **Make time.** Set aside a specific time each day for focused prayer. We make appointments through the day and commit to meet this appointment every day.
- ▶ **Make a list.** Start a prayer journal, listing specific individuals for whose salvation you are praying. Include the names of those in authority too. One option is to use the prayer pages on pages 6-9 of this book.
- ▶ **Make contact.** God often uses us to do more than just pray; He uses us in the answer. As God gives you opportunity, talk with those for whom you've been praying. Trust God to give you the words to say in sharing Christ.

