



First Baptist Church Selmer

"ORDER IN THE... CHURCH!" • PRIORITY OF PRAYER •
1 TIMOTHY 2:1-8; MATTHEW 5:23-24 • 3/17/2024

MAIN POINT

A healthy church is a praying church. Without prayer, a church has no power.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Do you believe in the power of prayer? As time allows, share an answered prayer with your group this morning.

How much time do you spend in prayer before our Sunday morning worship services?

Why is both private and corporate prayer essential as we gather weekly for worship?

Services that are dedicated to prayer can be life-changing. While many in our church may have been to a prayer service in the past, many others have not. Whether it be praying for the healing of a loved one, the calling of a new pastor, or various other reasons, prayer services need not be a thing of the past. A praying church is a powerful church. A church will never fulfill its mission of reaching others without the faithful prayers of a church and its people.

The verses from 1 Timothy 2:1-8 include a portion of Paul's instructions on public worship, specifically in regards to prayer. Through prayer, we commune with God and see Him at work in every aspect of our lives. As we gather weekly for worship, it is vital for our church to seek God in prayer both individually and corporately as well.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 TIMOTHY 2:1-2.

1 "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way." (ESV)

What kinds of prayers did Paul say we should pray? For whom were the prayers to be offered?

In verse 1, Paul mentioned four specific types of prayers: supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving. Supplications (petitions) are requests to meet our deepest spiritual needs. Prayers are other requests for ourselves made in reverence and humility. Intercessions are requests made on behalf of others. Thanksgivings are expressions of gratitude.

Why did Paul specifically urge the church to pray for people in authority?

Why is it important for Christians to remember governmental authorities in prayer?

According to Paul, we should pray for everyone (v. 1). This seems like a tall order. But after all, we pray because it is pleasing to God (v. 3). Paul also encouraged Timothy to pray for governmental authorities who could help provide an environment conducive to evangelism. In a time when Christianity was spreading rapidly, persecution was also on the rise. Even if the leaders were not respectable in and of themselves, Christians were instructed to pray for them because of the offices in which they held. Praying for those in authority was a way for the people of the church to be actively involved in the church's evangelism efforts in Ephesus and other parts of the world.

Why should Christians today continue to pray for governmental leaders even if we differ in what we believe?

What added pressures do Christian leaders face that non-Christian leaders might not deal with?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 TIMOTHY 2:3-8.

3 *"This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 5 For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. 7 For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. 8 I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling;"*
(ESV)

Based on Paul's words in these verses, what will be the result of our prayers?

What insight do these verses give us into the connection between prayer and evangelism?

What do we learn about God in these verses? How do these truths impact your relationship with Him?

How important is it for believers to spend time praying for non-believers as well?

Paul directly connected evangelism with pleasing God in this verse. Prayer for the lost pleases God because God wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. However, God's desire to save the lost does not mean that all will be saved. Each individual has to come to the knowledge of the truth of the gospel and respond to it in faith, a reference to conversion.

What do you think Paul meant by "holy hands"? What is another term you would use for the same meaning?

"Lifting holy hands" was a typical posture for prayer in the Bible. Paul's reference had very little to do with the literal positioning of one's hands in worship but *"holy hands"* represented the repentant life, free from unconfessed sins, relational grudges, and so on. Timothy was calling for worship free of distracting disagreements with other people in the church. This particular concept was also addressed by Jesus in Matthew 5:23-24.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 5:23-24.

23 "So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." (ESV)

What implications do these verses have for Timothy's instructions in 1 Timothy 2:8?

Why do anger and discord negatively impact our prayer lives, both personally and as a church?

When have you seen this to be true in your life? In our church?

No man or woman is free from the strain of earthly relationships both outside and inside the church. Paul instructs Timothy that worship should be unhindered by the strain of these relationships echoing Jesus' teaching on the Sermon on the Mount. As our heavenly Father, God is not pleased when two of his children attempt to worship with bitter or burdened hearts. His desire is for our worship to be free of distraction in order to give our very best back to Him, for anything less than our best, is not pleasing to God our Father.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Why do we sometimes neglect praying for our leaders especially if we disagree with them?

What are some things you can do to help remember to pray for our church and its leaders?

Of the four types of prayers mentioned in verse 1, which do you find yourself praying most often? Least often?

PRAYER

Spend a few minutes on each of the four types of prayers from 1 Timothy 2:1—petitions, personal prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings. End by thanking God for inviting us to join Him in His work in the world through the power of prayer.

COMMENTARY

| 1 TIMOTHY 2:1-8

2:1 Paul wrote 1 Timothy to give Timothy confidence to face those who spread false doctrine and undercut the church's commission to evangelize. Therefore, Paul's first line of defense was prayer. In this verse, the apostle mentioned four different words for prayer. Petitions included requests individuals made of God. The term prayers was the most general word. Intercessions included prayers for other believers. The thanksgivings Paul mentioned probably included gratitude for God's blessings. The apostle may not have intended any sharp distinction among the four terms. The use of all four terms emphasizes the importance of prayer in overcoming the false teaching in Ephesus and in winning the lost to Christ. The subject of these prayers included everyone—indicating the breadth of Paul's concern.

2:2 Paul encouraged Timothy to pray for governmental authorities who could help provide an environment conducive to evangelism.

2:3 A quiet life of dignity and godliness pleases God. God is also pleased when believers express concern for the salvation of others.

2:4 Paul directly connected evangelism with pleasing God in this verse. Prayer for the lost pleases God because God wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. The false teachers promoted lies, but Paul encouraged Timothy to pray that those lies would be exposed. *"Come to the knowledge of the truth"* is a way of referring to being converted. *"The truth"* is often used in 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus as a synonym for the gospel.

The Greek word translated *"saved"* can convey various meanings, including "to deliver, preserve, protect, heal," and "make whole." In the context of 1 Timothy 2:4 the word refers specifically to conversion, to the transformation that occurs when a person accepts Jesus Christ as Savior. Paul understood salvation in the believer's experience as embracing the past, present, and future. The initial moment of salvation, occurring when an individual accepts Christ as Savior, is sometimes referred to as justification. At that moment a believer enters into an eternally secure relationship of peace with God. Salvation, however, also continues in a process called sanctification or becoming more like Christ. The believer is enabled to progress toward spiritual maturity through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Ultimately the believer's salvation will culminate in a future glorification, or deliverance from the power of sin. Such is the final blessed and abiding

state of the redeemed with Christ. These various aspects of salvation motivated Paul to share the gospel with unbelievers.

2:5 In verses 5-6 Paul reiterated the contents of the truth, the gospel. He affirmed the Old Testament declaration that there is one God (see Deut. 6:4). However, the apostle also added that there is only one mediator between God and people. Jesus is that mediator. The term mediator refers to an arbiter or negotiator between two sides in dispute. Paul knew that only through Christ, both fully God and fully man, can sinful human beings come to God. Thus the apostle emphasized not only that all people need salvation but also there is only one way for sinful human beings to come to God. These verses provide the theological basis for the preceding statement that God wants people to be saved.

2:6 Jesus brought God and humanity together by offering Himself a ransom for all people. The term ransom refers to a price paid to release captives taken in war or to free slaves from their masters. Sin held people captive and separated them from God. Jesus voluntarily gave His own life—He paid the price—to set us free. The phrase a testimony at the proper time shows that Christ's death, occurring at the perfect time in God's timetable, is testimony and proof that God wants everyone to experience salvation (v. 4).

2:7 Paul's appointment as a herald, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles gave him the opportunity to spread the gospel. The church in Ephesus was in danger of losing its evangelistic zeal. Paul urged believers then and now to move back to the basics—that Jesus died for sinners and wants all people to be saved.

2:8 The word "therefore" resumes the call to prayer from verse 1. Lifting up hands was a typical posture for prayer in the Bible (Ex 9:29; 1Ki 8:22; Ps 28:2; 63:4; Isa 1:15; Lk 24:50).