



Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church

Building a Healthy Church

Instructions on Prayer

1 Timothy 2:1-8

01/27/2019

Main Point

Through prayer, we commune with God and see Him at work in every aspect of our lives.

Introduction

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

What role does prayer play in your personal life? What role should prayer play in a church's weekly gatherings?

Do you think our church does a good job of emphasizing the importance of prayer in our gathering times?

The Book of 1 Timothy is a series of instructions from the apostle Paul to Timothy, a younger church leader who Paul spent time training in leadership. 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.

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.

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 that believers should focus on. 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?

Do you believe “kings and all those who are in authority” have special God-given power? Why or why not?

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

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. 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.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 TIMOTHY 2:3-4.

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 do you reconcile the fact that God wants everyone to be saved with the reality that not everyone is or will be?

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.

HAVE A THIRD VOLUNTEER READ 1 TIMOTHY 2:8.

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

“Lifting up holy hands” was a typical posture for prayer in the Bible. 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.

Read Matthew 5:23-24. 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 personal and as a church? When have you seen this to be true in your life? In our church?

Application

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

Why is it often harder to remember to pray for people in authority when things are “tranquil and quiet” in life?

What are some things you can do to help you remember to pray for our leaders on a daily basis?

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

Pray

Spend a few minutes in 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 didn't write 1 Timothy as an exhaustive treatise on church organization. Instead, he wrote 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).

1 TIMOTHY 2:1-8

The priority of prayer (v. 1a). "First of all" indicates that prayer is most important in the public worship of the church. It is sad to see how prayer has lost importance in many churches. "If I announce a banquet," a pastor said, "people will come out of the woodwork to attend. But if I announce a prayer meeting, I'm lucky if the ushers show up!" Not only have the

special meetings for prayer lost stature in most local churches, but even prayer in the public services is greatly minimized. Many pastors spend more time on the announcements than they do in prayer!

The late Peter Deyneka, Sr., my good friend and founder of the Slavic Gospel Association, often reminded me: "Much prayer, much power! No prayer, no power!" Prayer was as much a part of the apostolic ministry as preaching the Word (Acts 6:4). Yet some pastors spend hours preparing their sermons, but never prepare their public prayers. Consequently, their prayers are routine, humdrum, and repetitious. I am not suggesting that a pastor write out every word and read it, but that he think through what he will pray about. This will keep "the pastoral prayer" from becoming dull and a mere repetition of what was "prayed" the previous week.

But the church members also need to be prepared to pray. Our hearts must be right with God and with each other. We must really want to pray, and not pray simply to please people (as did the Pharisees, Matt. 6:5), or to fulfill a religious duty. When a local church ceases to depend on prayer, God ceases to bless its ministry.

The variety of prayer (v. 1b). There are at least seven different Greek nouns for "prayer," and four of them are used here. Supplications carries the idea of "offering a request for a felt need."

Prayers is the commonest term for this activity, and it emphasizes the sacredness of prayer. We are praying to God; prayer is an act of worship, not just an expression of our wants and needs. There should be reverence in our hearts as we pray to God.

Intercessions is best translated "petitions." This same word is translated "prayer" in 1 Timothy 4:5, where it refers to blessing the food we eat. (It is rather obvious that we do not intercede for our food in the usual sense of that word.) The basic meaning is "to draw near to a person and converse confidently with him." It suggests that we enjoy fellowship with God so that we have confidence in Him as we pray.

Giving of thanks is definitely a part of worship and prayer. We not only give thanks for answers to prayer, but for who God is and what He does for us in His grace. We should not simply add our thanksgiving to the end of a selfish prayer! Thanksgiving should be an important ingredient in all of our prayers. In fact, sometimes we need to imitate David and present to God only thanksgiving with no petitions at all! (see Ps. 103)

"Prayer and supplication [petition] with thanksgiving" are a part of Paul's formula for God's peace in our hearts (Phil. 4:6). It is worth noting that Daniel, the great prayer-warrior, practiced this kind of praying (Dan. 6:10-11).

The objects of prayer (vv. 1c-2). “All men” makes it clear that no person on earth is outside the influence of believing prayer. (We have no examples of exhortations that say we should pray for the dead. If we should pray for the dead, Paul certainly had a good opportunity to tell us in this section of his letter.) This means we should pray for the unsaved and the saved, for people near us and people far away, for enemies as well as friends. Unfortunately, the Pharisees did not have this universal outlook in their prayers, for they centered their attention primarily on Israel.

Paul urged the church to especially pray for those in authority. Godless Emperor Nero was on the throne at that time, and yet the believers were supposed to pray for him! Even when we cannot respect men or women in authority, we must respect their offices and pray for them. In fact, it is for our own good that we do so: “that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness” (1 Tim. 2:2b, NIV). The early church was always subject to opposition and persecution, so it was wise to pray for those in authority. “Quiet” refers to circumstances around us, while “peaceful” refers to a calm attitude within us. The results should be lives that are godly and honorable.

To be sure, Paul has not named all the persons we can and should pray for, since “all men” covers the matter fully. We can’t pray for everybody in the world by name, but we certainly ought to pray for those we know and know about. Why? Because it’s a good thing to do and because it pleases God.

The reasons for prayer (vv. 3-4). The word “good” is a key word in Paul’s pastoral epistles (1 Tim. 1:8, 18; 2:3; 3:1, 7, 13; 4:4, 6; 5:4, 10, 25; 6:12-13, 18-19; 2 Tim. 1:14; 2:3; 4:7; Titus 2:7, 14; 3:8, 14). The Greek word emphasizes the idea of something being intrinsically good, not just good in its effects. “Fair” and “beautiful” are synonyms. Certainly prayer of itself is a goodly practice, and brings with it many good benefits.

But prayer is also pleasing to the Lord. It pleases the Father when His children pray as He has commanded them to. The Pharisees prayed in order to be praised by men (Matt. 6:5) or to impress other worshipers (Luke 18:9-14). True Christians pray in order to please God. This suggests that we must pray in the will of God, because it certainly does not please the Father when we pray selfishly (James 4:1-10; 1 John 5:14-15). It’s often said that the purpose of prayer is not to get man’s will done in heaven, but to get God’s will done on earth.

What is God’s will? The salvation of lost souls, for one thing. We can pray for “all men” because it is God’s will that “all men” come to the knowledge of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. God loved the world (John 3:16) and Christ died for the whole world (1 John 2:2; 4:14). Jesus died on the cross that He might draw “all men” to salvation (John 12:32). This does not mean

all people without exception, for certainly the whole world is not going to be saved. It means all people without distinction—Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, religious and pagan.

If God doesn't want anyone to perish, then why are so many lost? God is long-suffering with lost sinners, even delaying His judgment that they might come to Christ (2 Peter 3:9). But salvation depends on a "knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4). Not everyone has heard the truth of the Gospel, and many who have heard have rejected it. We cannot explain the mystery of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility (see John 6:37), but realize that both are taught in the Bible and are harmonized in God's great plan of salvation. We do know that prayer is an important part of God's program for reaching a lost world. We have the responsibility of praying for lost souls (Rom. 10:1) and making ourselves available to share the Gospel with others.

The basis for prayer (vv. 5-7). Many believers do not realize that prayer is based on the work of Jesus Christ as Saviour and Mediator. As the God-Man, Jesus Christ is the perfect Mediator between the holy God and His failing children. One of Job's complaints had to do with the absence of a mediator who could take his message to the throne of God. "There is no umpire between us, who may lay his hand upon us both" (Job 9:33, NASB).

Since there is only one God, there is need for only one Mediator; and that Mediator is Jesus Christ. No other person can qualify. Jesus Christ is both God and man, and, therefore, can be the "umpire" between God and man. In His perfect life and substitutionary death, He met the just demands of God's holy law. He was the "ransom for all." The word ransom means "a price paid to free a slave." His death was "on behalf of all." Though the death of Christ is efficient only for those who trust Him, it is sufficient for the sins of the whole world. Jesus said that He came "to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28).

Christ died for "all men," and God is willing for "all men to be saved." How does this Good News get out to a sinful world? God calls and ordains messengers who take the Gospel to lost sinners. Paul was such a messenger: he was a preacher (the herald of the King), an apostle (one sent with a special commission), and a teacher. The same God who ordains the end (the salvation of the lost) also ordains the means to the end: prayer and preaching of the Word. This Good News is not for the Jews only, but also for the Gentiles.

If the basis for prayer is the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ on the cross, then prayer is a most important activity in a church. Not to pray is to slight the cross! To pray only for ourselves is to deny the worldwide outreach of the cross. To ignore lost souls is to ignore the cross. "All men"

[people] is the key to this paragraph: We pray for “all” because Christ died for “all” and it is God’s will that “all” be saved. We must give ourselves to God to be a part of His worldwide program to reach people before it is too late.

The attitude in prayer (v. 8). Paul stated definitely that “men” should pray in the local assembly. Both men and women prayed in the early church (1 Cor. 11:4–5), but the emphasis here is on the men. It is common to find women’s prayer meetings, but not often do we find men’s prayer meetings. If the men do not pray, the local church will not have dedicated leaders to oversee its ministry.

It was customary for Jewish men to pray with their arms extended and their hands open to heaven. Our traditional posture of bowing the head, folding the hands, and closing the eyes is nowhere found or commanded in Scripture. Actually, there are many prayer postures found in the Bible: standing with outstretched hands (1 Kings 8:22); kneeling (Dan. 6:10); standing (Luke 18:11); sitting (2 Sam. 7:18); bowing the head (Gen. 24:26); lifting the eyes (John 17:1); falling on the ground (Gen. 17:3). The important thing is not the posture of the body but the posture of the heart.

Paul stated three essentials for effective prayer, and the first was “holy hands.” Obviously this means a holy life. “Clean hands” was symbolic of a blameless life (2 Sam. 22:21; Ps. 24:4). If we have sin in our lives, we cannot pray and expect God to answer (Ps. 66:18).

“Without wrath” is the second essential, and requires that we be on good terms with one another. “Without anger” might be a better translation. A person who is constantly having trouble with other believers, who is a troublemaker rather than a peacemaker, cannot pray and get answers from God.

“Doubting” suggests that we must pray in faith, but the word really means “disputing.” When we have anger in the heart, we often have open disagreements with others. Christians should learn to disagree without being disagreeable. We should “do all things without murmurings and disputings” (Phil. 2:14).

Effective praying, then, demands that I be in a right relationship with God (“holy hands”) and with my fellow believers (“without murmurings and disputings”). Jesus taught the same truth (Mark 11:24–26). If we spent more time preparing to pray and getting our hearts right before God, our prayers would be more effective.

Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 214–217.